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# An Investigation of the Relationship Between Teachers' Orientations in Reading Process and Instruction: Four Case Studies.

Carrice Lou Cummins

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
TEACHERS' ORIENTATIONS IN READING-PROCESS  
AND INSTRUCTION: FOUR CASE STUDIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May 1998



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## DEDICATION

*With love, I dedicate this manuscript to Momma.*

She always believed in me and my abilities, supported my professional efforts,  
and took pride in each of my accomplishments.

She was always there to take care of the responsibilities that had to be shifted  
in order to pursue this professional endeavor.

She once said that she regretted never receiving a college degree.

Well, her name may not have appeared on the diplomas,  
but it belongs beside my name on every one I ever achieved.

*I love you Momma and I miss you.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The beliefs that teachers hold about how children learn are often reflected in the instructional practices they use to help children become readers. The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to identify teachers' beliefs regarding how reading takes place and how reading develops, (b) to examine the instructional reading practices implemented in teachers' classrooms, and (c) to explore the relationships between teachers' theoretical beliefs and their instructional practices in providing appropriate reading instruction.

Qualitative methods informed this study by providing case studies of four primary grade teachers, giving detailed accounts of their theoretical beliefs--process and instruction. Two of the teachers held theoretical beliefs based on a top-down model of reading and utilized pedagogical practices associated with literature-based instruction. The other two teachers upheld beliefs characteristic of a bottom-up construct of reading and implemented skills-based instructional practices in their classrooms. The data obtained through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that there was a significant relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher activities. These results indicate that the beliefs teachers hold influence their behaviors in the classroom.

Implications resulting from these findings could be instrumental in improving the professional preparation and teaching practices of teachers and teacher candidates,

as it is essential that we provide them with opportunities to develop sound pedagogy that closely links successful classroom practices. By knowing and understanding what teachers do and why they do it, we will be better able to meet the reading needs of young readers.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Learning to read is probably one of the most difficult yet important tasks that face young children today; thus, it is no wonder that the goal of most early childhood educators is to help their students become lifelong readers. The importance of literacy acquisition is not disputable, yet almost everything else related to the subject is highly debatable.

The beliefs that teachers hold about how children learn are reflected in the models and strategies they use to help children become readers (Casbon, Schirmer, & Twiss, 1997). For years, researchers and teachers have been searching for the best instructional practices for teaching students to read (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967; Flesch, 1955). A variety of approaches is used in classrooms today, and each offers very different and opposing perspectives on how children learn best. Consequently, there are opposing perspectives on the instructional practices that are best suited to them.

The perspective one develops about reading and reading instruction is crucial because it affects the teaching and thus the students being taught. Harste and Burke (1977) state, "Teachers are theoretical in their instructional approach to reading" (p. 32). This claim is further supported by Rupley and Logan's (1984) conclusion that

elementary teachers' reading beliefs influence decision-making regarding instructional practices implemented in their classrooms. Routman (1991) reiterates this thought in her stance that educators need to examine their beliefs about how children learn and combine them with their own educational background, experience, and a clear theoretical literacy model to find their own literate voice. Watson (1984) strongly concurs with this claim as evident in the following statement: "We are our beliefs. They direct everything that happens in or out of our classrooms" (p. 606). These claims reiterate the need for educators to use their own literate voice to translate beliefs into effective practice and thus provide success to beginning readers.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This research was rooted in my experience as an instructional supervisor and my concerns about the apparent discrepancy between some teachers' assertions about their instructional practice and my observation of their teaching. This concern first emanated through my work with new teachers employed in my school system, as it seemed apparent that they were equipped with a variety of teaching strategies yet lacked the theoretical foundation for the application of these practices. This realization stimulated a new avenue of inquiry in my observations of the experienced teachers under my supervision. It was at this point that I began to wonder: Do teachers base instructional decisions on a particular theoretical model toward reading acquisition and instruction? How does a theoretical model guide instructional decision-making? What are the implications for teacher preparation and inservice staff development if theoretical orientations are important? As I pondered these questions, my research purpose became more evident.

With my research I strove to clarify what four teachers believed to be important about literacy acquisition and the relationship between these beliefs and classroom practices. In addition to my personal concerns, this study emanated from the current controversy about reading instruction and the position in which teachers find themselves in the battle of deciding which instructional practices will be used in their classroom: literature-based or skills-based.

Research suggests that approaches to teaching reading are based on different beliefs. This research into teachers' thought processes and, specifically, their implicit theories and beliefs is a relatively new area of inquiry with a minimal amount of information available (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Fenney & Chun, 1985; Spodek, 1988); however, it is increasingly recognized as a critical origin of teachers' actions in their instructional programs and has thus become somewhat of a focus of inquiry in the past 10 to 15 years. In this approach, the mental processing which underlies instructional practices is investigated. Researchers advocating the cognitive information-processing approach to studying the nature of teaching emphasize that before teacher educators can adequately influence teaching behavior, there is a need to understand the relationship between teachers' thinking and their behavior (Clark & Yinger, 1978). This investigation into teachers' thought processes is complicated by the fact that thought processes cannot be directly observed but must be inferred by the things a teacher says and does. Pajares (1992) and Short and Burke (1996) noted the assumption that since teachers' thinking and behaviors are governed by their belief systems, then perhaps researchers must examine these systems and the context in which teachers make instructional decisions.

One approach to the study of teacher thinking and its impact on classroom instruction is to view teachers as holding implicit theories or conceptual frameworks which guide instructional decision-making. Teachers' beliefs are not, however, always clearly demonstrated in the ways in which they teach. Current research has focused quite intensely on instructional practices associated with skills-based and literature-based approaches; however, limited studies have been conducted on teachers' theoretical orientations toward reading processes as related to classroom instruction of the two approaches. Thus, there was a need to examine teachers' implicit theories of the learning-to-read process and then determine the disparity or congruency between personal philosophy and pedagogical practice.

This study explored the personal beliefs and educational practices of four primary grade teachers and analyzed the relationships between their philosophical beliefs and pedagogical practices. Qualitative methods informed this study by providing case studies of the four teachers, giving detailed accounts of their theoretical orientations to reading--process and instruction. Some of the teachers utilized pedagogical practices associated with skills-based instruction, while others followed more literature-based practices. The data was analyzed in order to establish an understanding of the relationship between the teachers' theoretical orientations (beliefs) about reading and their reading instructional practices.

### **The Setting**

This study was conducted with primary grade teachers, grades 1 through 3, employed in public schools located in a rural Northeast Louisiana school district. Pseudonyms were given to all participants and research sites mentioned in the study.

### The Community

Blume Parish is located in northeast Louisiana. As of January 1998, the parish had a total population of approximately 20,686 with an ethnic composition of 63% European-American, 36.7% African-American, and .3% Hispanic, Asian, and/or Native American. The parish covers an area of 368,640 square acres and is comprised of three towns and seven villages. The parish economy is predominantly agricultural but is also supported by some oil, gas, and lumber industries. Income statistics for parish residents reflect an annual per capita income of \$12,200, which is well below the state average. The rate of unemployment had seen a steady incline over the past few years and as of October 1, 1997, scaled over 13%.

### The Educational System

The educational system of Blume Parish consists of both public and private schools, Blume Parish School Board and Blumefield Academy, respectively. During the 1997-1998 school year, the public school system served approximately 4,448 students in 12 schools: 3 high schools, 3 junior high schools, 5 elementary schools, and 1 special education school. The racial composition was 54% African-American, 45% European-American, and 1% Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. Blumefield Academy is located within the city limits of the largest town in Blume Parish which gives it a central location within the attendance zone. It is a kindergarten through grade 12 school and serves about 500 students annually.

The special education department for the parish provides services for students with special needs--approximately 13% of the student population. The high school dropout rate had shown a steady increase over the past decade with a current rate of

over 30%. This figure does not reflect the number who later enrolled in adult education classes.

The selection of the specific school sites for this study was contingent upon information obtained from surveys distributed to all primary grade educators (teachers of grades 1 through 3) in Blume Parish and interviews with selected survey participants. The possible sites included all six of the elementary schools located in the parish: Rose Elementary, Iris Elementary, Lily Elementary, Glad Elementary, Moss Elementary, and Blumefield Academy. Data collected from these sources, coupled with teachers' willingness to participate, resulted in three of the six school sites being included in the study.

All three of the selected sites maintained self-contained classrooms in the early grades. *Treasury of Literature* (1995) was the adopted basal text used in each of the primary grade classrooms. The schools maintained an average class size of 25 students in grades 1 and 2 and 28 in grade 3. A teacher assistant was utilized in each of these grades for 1 to 2 hours daily. Specific and unique site characteristics are more descriptively discussed in the following section.

### The Schools

Rose Elementary, a prekindergarten through grade 5 school, is located in the largest town of Blume Parish. At the time of this study, the student body of approximately 810 students reflected a racial composition of 72% African-American and 28% European-American, with over 85% participating in the federal free and reduced-lunch program. The faculty was comprised of 1 principal, 1 disciplinarian, 1 counselor, 1 librarian, 1 music teacher, 1 art teacher, 7 prekindergarten teachers

(5 noncategorical teachers and 2 state-funded teachers), 6 special education teachers, 38 regular education teachers, 3 Reading Recovery teachers, 2 physical education teachers, and 19 teacher assistants. The school was participating in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a Title 1 schoolwide program in which its primary goal was to improve reading achievement by promoting early intervention programs and a reduced teacher-pupil ratio.

Moss Elementary is a prekindergarten through grade 5 school that serves the third largest town in Blume Parish. At the time of this study, approximately 410 students were enrolled at Moss Elementary with 62% participating in the free or reduced-meal program. The racial make-up of the student body was about 58% European-American and 42% African-American. Moss Elementary had a faculty of 1 principal, 1 noncategorical prekindergarten teacher, 20 regular education teachers, 2 special education teachers, 1 foreign language teacher, 1 itinerant Reading Recovery teacher, and 9 teacher assistants. The Title 1 schoolwide program of Moss Elementary emphasized reading for fun, as well as academic improvement.

Iris Elementary School is located in the far western section of the parish. The kindergarten through grade 8 school serves the small rural village of Iris. At the time of this study, the student body was 82% European-American and 18% African-American, with 45.3% falling below poverty level as determined by federal free or reduced-lunch participation. One principal, 1 special education teacher, 1 physical education teacher, 1 instructional music teacher, 1 teacher assistant, 1 librarian/computer assistant, 18 regular education teachers, and 1 itinerant Reading Recovery teacher comprised the Iris

Elementary School faculty. The school participated in the Title 1 program as a targeted assistance school which used computer reading and motivational programs as a major vehicle for improving reading skills of targeted students.

### The Teachers

All of the teachers employed in grades 1 through 3 in Blume Parish were invited to participate in the initial stage of the study. Each teacher was given the DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) (see Appendix A) to complete independently. A invitation/explanatory letter (see Appendix B) accompanied the TORP and explained the purpose and overall plan of the study. Teachers who returned the completed survey and whose analyzed scores indicated a predominate preference for literature-based or skills-based instruction were asked to continue in the study.

Eighteen teachers whose TORP responses indicated a strong instructional preference continued participation in the study by undergoing an interview to determine their theoretical orientations regarding the reading process. The Reading Belief Interview (see Appendix C) was used as the basis of the interview process and helped identify those who appeared to hold strong top-down and bottom-up theoretical orientations.

The teachers who were chosen to continue in the study were reviewed according to several factors: grade level taught, educational background, teaching experience, and site location. Equal representation of the aforementioned variables were considered, but the primary selection criteria rested in the strength of the teachers belief systems relative to top-down literature-based and bottom-up skills-based models of reading.



### **Significance of the Study**

“One’s personal predisposition is not only relevant but, in fact, stands at the core of becoming a teacher” (Lortie, 1975, p. 85). The attitudes and values held by teachers of young children appear to be directly related to teacher effectiveness (Fenney & Chun, 1985). Spodek (1988) has described the implicit theories that teachers hold as the foundation of professional behavior and stresses the importance of understanding the perceptions, constructs, and beliefs that underlie teacher effectiveness in the classroom. He has argued that teachers construct their own conceptions of development, curriculum, and instruction as they interpret their practical and theoretical knowledge and act to integrate these constructions into their practice (Spodek, 1988).

Research focused on reading instructional methods additionally suggests that the most important variable in instructional effectiveness is the teacher (Duffy, 1977). Harste and Burke (1977) agree that the teacher makes a difference and hypothesize that the key component of this variable is the teacher’s theoretical orientation. Rupley and Logan (1984) support and extend this claim by concluding that teachers’ beliefs about reading influence the instructional decision-making that impacts student learning. Cambourne (1988) goes even further by stating that “teachers are prisoners of a model of reading” (p. 17). This implies that what teachers actually do when they are engaged in teaching is motivated by what they believe about the processes that underlie learning.

Cheek, Flipppo, and Lindsey (1997) identify the following main issues related to the importance of teachers’ maintaining a sound philosophy regarding reading and learning:

1. Teachers exert a strong and lasting influence on their students.
2. Teachers' philosophies are often the basis for how teachers perceive their roles and, consequently, influence how they teach.
3. Teachers' philosophies about reading influence every aspect of their classrooms and also influence their students' perceptions about reading and learning.

Beliefs have been said to be one of the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968). Bandura concluded that people regulate their level and distribution of effort in accordance with the effects they expect their actions to have. As a result, their behavior is better predicted from their beliefs than from the actual consequences of their actions. Therefore, few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgements, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom. Additionally, many agree that understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates could be instrumental in improving their professional preparation and teaching practices (Ashton, 1990; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fenstermacher, 1979, 1986; Goodman, 1988; Munby, 1982, 1984; Nespor, 1987).

If the teachers and their beliefs are indeed the impetus for effective teaching and learning, then it is essential that we provide them with opportunities to develop sound pedagogy that closely links successful classroom practices. By knowing and understanding what we do and why we do it, we will be better able to meet the reading needs of young readers.

### **Research Questions**

This descriptive study first portrays the beliefs of four primary grade teachers regarding reading acquisition and then examines the instructional practices carried out in their classrooms. By studying the beliefs and practices of reading teachers, I was able to provide valuable insights into the relationship of teacher beliefs and classroom practice by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' beliefs regarding how reading takes place and how reading develops?
2. How do the teachers implement reading instruction in their classrooms?
3. Is there a relationship between the teachers' beliefs and their instructional classroom practices in providing appropriate reading instruction?

The investigation of teachers' beliefs is a valuable and necessary avenue of educational inquiry. However, challenges to teacher beliefs, both theoretical and applicable, come from an array of sources--policy makers, researchers, parents, other teachers, and even the children themselves. Due to the plethora of challenges, controversies, and complexities involved in the reading process, it is difficult for research to answer these questions. However, valuable information was obtained from this study that provides an insightful understanding of the role theoretical orientations play in teachers' instructional decision-making. After all, why teachers teach as they do is the first question we must answer if we hope to improve reading instruction in the primary grades.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Do teachers use a theoretical framework in their instructional approach to teaching reading? If so, does a relationship exist between their theoretical orientations toward reading development and their pedagogical practices? The literature review that follows will address these questions by focusing on three broad areas: (a) teachers' theoretical orientations to the reading process, (b) teachers' theoretical orientations to reading instruction, and (c) the relationship between these belief systems.

Though teacher beliefs toward learning and instruction could be examined through various perspectives, this literature review will specifically address teachers' orientations toward literature-based and skills-based instruction. This decision was made because of the current status these perspectives hold in reading education. The study, however, could be conducted via any perspective as the significance lies not in the approach but in the potential impact the results might have on the teaching and learning of reading. Hopefully, by knowing and understanding what we do and why we do it, teachers will be better able to meet the reading needs of young readers.

### **Theoretical Orientations to Reading-- Process and Instruction**

The investigation of teachers' beliefs about reading, or any area of study, is a complex endeavor. One major obstacle that impedes this investigation is the lack of conventional agreement among researchers on the definition of teacher beliefs. Some have defined beliefs as one of the categories of teachers' thought processes that include teachers' knowledge, planning, practice, and decisions (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Harste and Burke (1977) defined teacher beliefs as teacher decisions, while Duffy and Ball (1986) defined beliefs in terms of cognition and conceptual frameworks. Harste and Burke's (1985) view of teacher beliefs later expanded as they attempted to understand the relationship of knowledge and beliefs. This focus on knowledge as the basis for practice resulted in their conclusion that all practice is theory-based.

Casbon *et al.* (1997) state that many educators today view beliefs about learning as essential and positive, because these beliefs form the foundation for instructional decisions. This view is substantiated by the fact that many developmental reading and language arts textbooks emphasize the need for the reader to: (a) develop a personal definition of literacy (Lapp & Flood, 1992), (b) identify one's own basic perspective (Manzo & Manzo, 1995), and (c) recognize factors involved in one's view of reading and the way the process takes place and develops (Leu & Kinzer, 1995).

Over the years much research has been conducted in the area of teachers' theoretical beliefs. This is especially true in the area based on views of the reading process, that is, how reading takes place. There is, however, a belief system of potentially equal importance that deals with how the process is acquired, that is, how

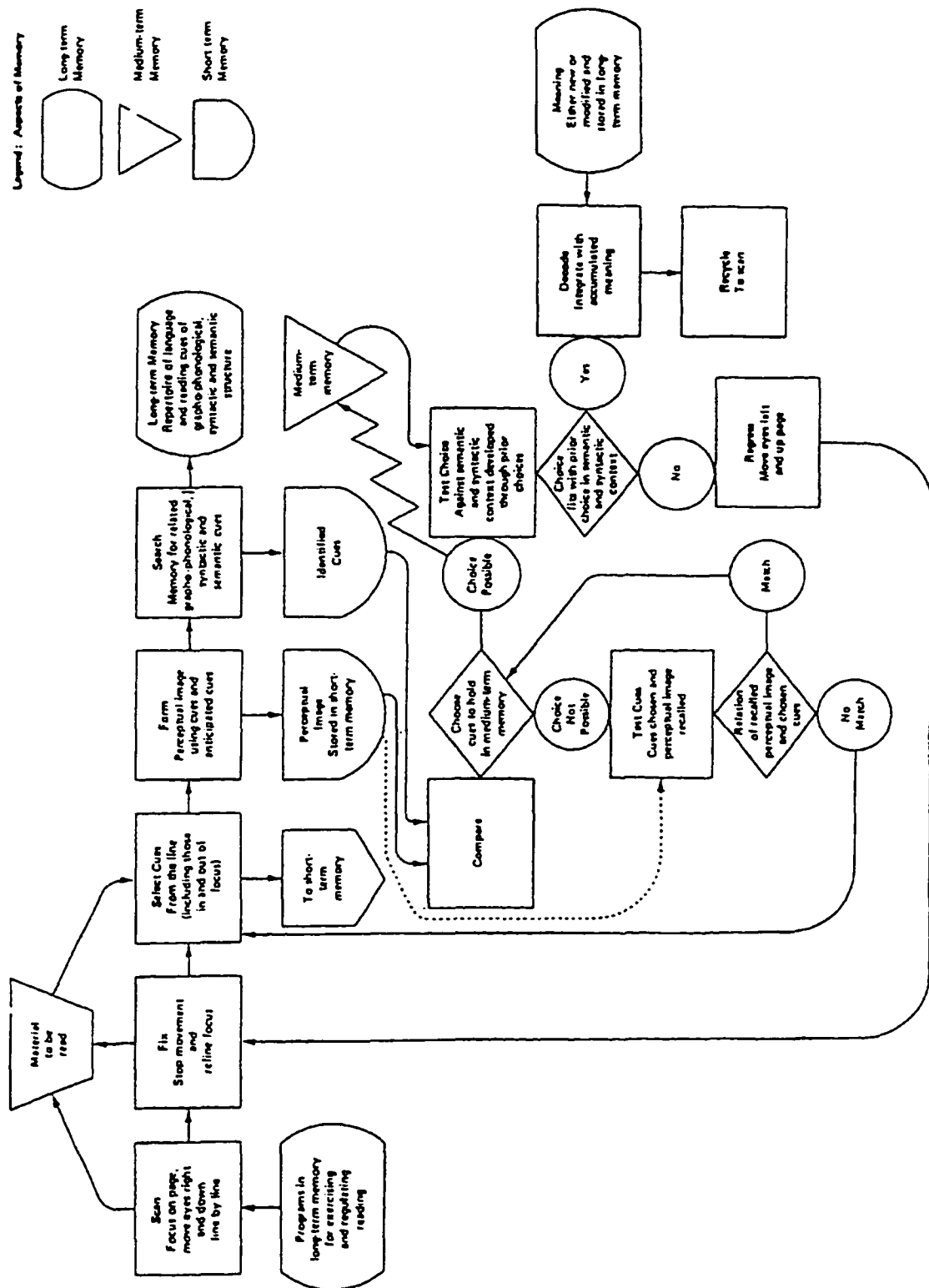
reading develops. Theoretical beliefs of the reading process are usually based on the three prevalent views described by Danks (1978): top-down, bottom-up, and interactive. Likewise, there exist three basic explanations of how reading is best taught and learned: skills, holistic, and differential acquisition (Leu & Kinzer, 1987) or phonics, skills, and whole language (Harste & Burke, 1977). Although teachers' beliefs about reading are categorized into two separate camps--process and development--it is extremely difficult to discuss the two individually. For the purposes of this review, the two main types of information processing models that deal with how reading takes place (bottom-up and top-down) and the two general categories of how reading develops (skills-based and literature-based instruction) will be discussed. Both aspects of teachers' belief systems will be investigated conjunctively: top-down and literature-based, bottom-up and skills-based, respectively.

### Top-Down and Literature-Based Belief Systems

Proponents of top-down belief systems assert that reading for meaning is an essential component of all reading situations. These models emphasize that the reader has hypotheses regarding the meaning of the passage being read and uses the lower levels of analysis to check out these hypotheses. Obviously there are no pure top-down models because a reader must first begin by focusing on print.

The Goodman (1976) model illustrated in Figure 2.1 is an example of a top-down model. The steps in his suggested process are as follows:

1. An eye movement fixates on new material.
2. The reader selects graphic cues from the field of vision.
3. A perceptual image of part of the text is formed.



**Figure 2.1.**  
Goodman's reading model.

4. An image results from perceptions of what the reader sees and expects to see, based on his strategies, cognitive style, knowledge, and contextual constraints from previously analyzed material.

5. The reader searches his memory for related syntactic, semantic, and phonological cues to enrich the perceptual image.

6. The reader makes a guess or tentative choice consistent with graphic cues. If it is successful, it is held in medium-term memory; if it is not successful, the reader tries again.

7. Finally, the hypothesis is tested against knowledge for grammatical and syntactic acceptability. If it fits, it is stored in long-term memory and predictions are made about forthcoming text. If it is not successful, the process is repeated.

Literature provides us with several different views of top-down models, and each model is as unique as its developer, yet each exemplifies the same basic process characteristics as follows:

1. The process of translating print to meaning begins with the reader's prior knowledge that is initiated by making predictions about the meaning of a unit of print.

2. Meaning and grammatical cues as well as graphic cues aid in the identification of unknown words found in reading selections that emphasize language units that begin with the whole text, paragraphs, and sentences.

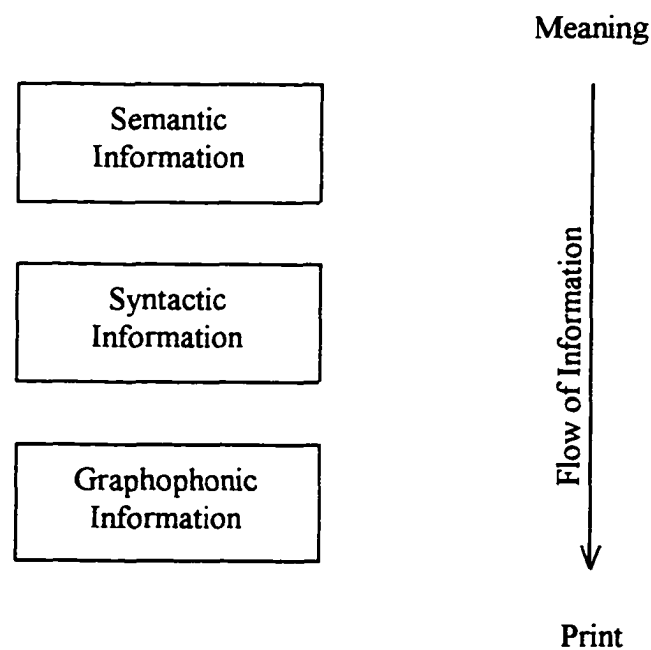
3. Students engage in this meaning-driven process while involved in reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities.

Goodman (1997) has revised his model and now uses a text design rather than an illustrative design to explain his model of the reading process. In a personal



conversation with Dr. Goodman (May, 1997), he explained that his new book, *On Reading* (1997), described in detail his new model of reading. The model is written in a much friendlier fashion but contains the same general philosophy. In summary, the model views reading as a continuous process in which four cycles are involved--visual, perceptual, syntactic, and semantic. Visual input initiates the cycle and then construction of meaning begins as the reader moves through the cyclical process.

As stated earlier, there are various models as well as terms for top-down approaches. Reader-based, transactional, psycholinguistic, and constructivist are a few of the most common terms that reflect this form of processing. Each model is different, yet all are common in that they are conceptually driven and meaning proceeds from whole to part. This view of top-down processing is illustrated in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2.**  
Top-down processing.

Literature-based reading instruction is used by teachers who are interested in providing for individual differences while focusing on meaning, interest, and enjoyment. Literature-based programs stress that reading is the number one priority of classroom life and that authentic literature and real books are used to develop lifelong readers and writers (Routman, 1991).

One of the main goals behind a holistic instructional belief is to teach students the skillful use of language. They do develop skills and strategies but in the context of meaningful learning, not in linear progression. The effective reader utilizes the language systems (semantics, syntaxs, and graphophonics) to be successful with the text (Goodman, 1986), while involved in meaningful reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities.

Literature-based practices permeate communities of learners (Atwell, 1987; Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1986; Smith, 1989). Teachers and students come together to engage in reading, writing, and other collaborative acts of meaning-making. This community environment not only promotes socialization but provides students with the encouragement to share their knowledge with others and to take ownership of their own learning.

Other key practices present in holistic reading programs are immersion, authenticity, demonstration, engagement, time, response, and approximation (Cambourne, 1988, p. 33). Teachers immerse students in language, oral and written, in order to engage them in explorations of a variety of real texts thereby satisfying their real needs. Demonstration and engagement are very important components as illustrated in Smith's (1989) summation that a teacher who expresses boredom by what

he or she is teaching demonstrates to children that what is being taught is boring. Likewise, meaningless busy work demonstrates that reading is meaningless; therefore, students should be engaged in real-life meaningful activities. Time to read is provided throughout the day rather than just during departmentalized time blocks. Additionally, students are given opportunities to respond to the learning via collaboration with the teacher and other students as well as the freedom to be a risk-taker as they learn strategies to approximate language as they read.

Studies have been conducted in classrooms utilizing these theoretical orientations. A landmark study by Cohen (1968) and later replicated by Cullinan, Jaggar, and Strickland (1974) showed significant increases in word knowledge, comprehension, and vocabulary for students taught in a literature-based program over those taught in a basal program. Roser, Hoffman, and Farest (1990) conducted a study which showed significant reading gains for students with limited English proficiency when they were immersed in real literature. The reading ability of emotionally handicapped children also increased significantly through a literature-based reading program (D'Alessandro, 1990), and most importantly, a vast number of reading achievement studies report major shifts in students' attitudes toward reading.

### Summary

Top-down and literature-based theories represent a holistic perspective of reading. There are numerous models representative of this theory, each different yet similar in some way. Adherents of these belief systems all agree, however, that meaning begins with the reader at the top level of comprehension and moves downward to a lower level of skills processing.

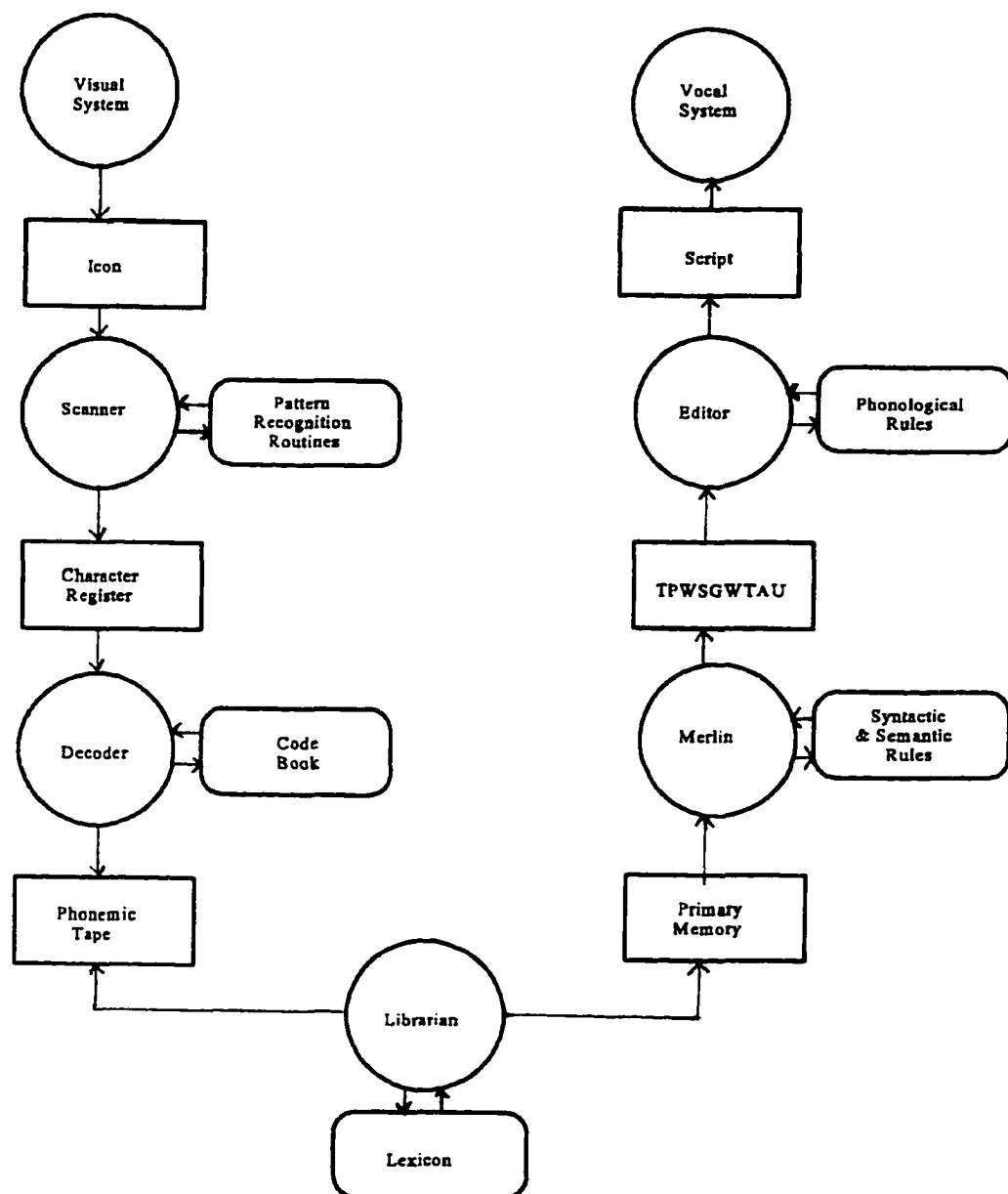
### Bottom-Up and Skills-Based Belief Systems

Proponents of bottom-up belief systems assert that reading starts at the bottom (with the text and less complex skills) and moves toward the top (use of more complex skills that lead to meaning acquisition). Many advocates of this perspective go as far as to infer that meaning cannot be constructed from a text until students are able to recognize every word in the selection. The Gough model (1985) seen in Figure 2.3 essentially depicts a bottom-up model of reading that demonstrates a linear and hierarchical flow from the glimpse of the printed word to the completion of decoding. The process outlined in this model is as follows:

1. It begins with a visual fixation of information.
2. The Icon registers this visual information until another fixation is made available.
3. The Scanner follows (with the help of pattern recognition routines held in long-term memory) which identifies a fixation as a sequence of letters operating from left to right.
4. A string of letters is placed on the Character Register.
5. The Decoder immediately “maps the characters onto a string of ‘systematic-phonemes (hypothetical entities that are systematically related to speech but are capable of being set up much more rapidly than speech itself)” (Gough, 1985, p. 131). This is accomplished with the help of a Code Book of grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence rules.
6. This message is stored temporarily into the Phonemic Tape (similar to a tape recording).

“Suppose the eye . . .”

“Suppose . . .”



**Figure 2.3.**  
Gough's model of reading.

Legend: Definition of terms  
 Scanner: Character recognition device  
 TPWSGWTAU: The place where sentences  
 go when they are understood

Lexicon: Comprehension device  
 Librarian, Editor, Merlin:  
 Decoding helpers

7. The Librarian, with the help of the Lexicon, identifies the sequence holding them in Primary Memory.

8. Finally, the sentence can be passed by Merlin (comprehensive device which draws upon syntactic and semantic rules to analyze the sentence) and place it in a more stable form of storage termed TPWSGWTAU (The Place Where Sentences Go When They Are Understood). The rest of this model is directed to voiced reading.

Other models, such as the Laberge and Samuels (1976) model, also represent a bottom-up theory of reading development. Each model stresses the flow of information acquisition from visual to vocal with the major difference being reflected in the degree of automaticity in processing. Generally speaking, the process of deriving meaning from print is triggered by graphic information embedded in the print. Students engage in this process by identifying letter features, linking these features together to recognize letters, combining letters into spelling patterns, linking patterns to recognize words, and then proceeding to sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts to derive meaning.

Various terms are used to describe different models reflective of this belief system; for example, text-based, transmission, reductionist, and behaviorist. All prototype models for bottom-up processing differ in some unique way, but all are described as being data-driven in which meaning proceeds from part to whole (see Figure 2.4).

Putnam (1983) concluded that theoretical orientation shapes instructional practice within the classroom. Bottom-up theorists generally enlist a skills-based or phonics approach to reading development. Skills-based instruction is used by teachers

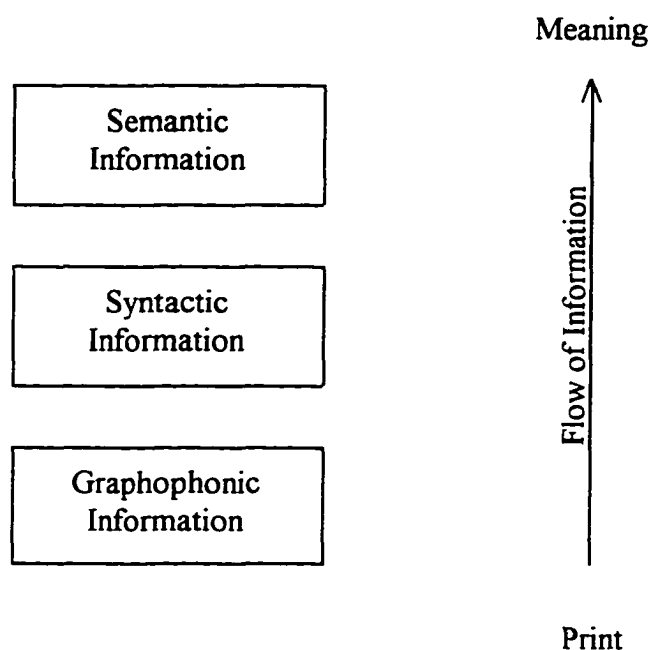


Figure 2.4.  
Bottom-up processing.

who believe that learning to read requires the acquisition of a finite but sizable number of skills that are taught in linear progression. In this learning environment, the text is the primary source of information, and the main goal is for the student to make meaning directly from the text. This view suggests that there is but one correct way to interpret what the author intended.

Skills-based classrooms support direct teacher instruction. Reading skills are viewed as distinct units that are taught and used in isolation as skill areas are extracted for direct and purposeful instruction. Kimball and Heron (1988) note that teacher control is an important component of this approach, as the teacher controls what skills will be developed, the pacing of instruction, the materials used, and student behavior and interaction, as well as directly teaching the skills to the students. In this learning

process, the student generally plays a passive role while the teacher plays the central role and transmits the required knowledge.

Transmission of the required information usually follows a standard lesson framework in which skills are directly introduced prior to any actual reading experience. Students are then allowed to read a controlled vocabulary selection, usually silently and then orally. Reading is usually followed by a teacher-question/student-response activity. The lesson typically concludes with students participating in an independent seatwork exercise that normally consists of workbook or skill practice sheets. Product instead of process is the major concern of teachers who subscribe to a skills-based orientation.

Skills-based instruction in the classroom has been shown to be a successful model of teaching reading for many students, as often evidenced by standardized test scores (Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996). Chall (1967) concluded in her studies that systematic direct instruction is a valuable component of reading instruction. Two major studies conducted by the United States Department of Education, one in 1964-67 (United States Department of Education, 1976) and the Follow Through study in 1970-71 (United States Department of Education, 1971), also concluded that systematic skills instruction was very important to beginning reading instruction, especially for students at risk of reading failure.

### Summary

Adherents of a bottom-up and skills-based hierarchical type of reading orientation do not necessarily have exactly the same beliefs, as there are various aspects related to this reading perspective, as evidenced in the above review.



### Summary

Two predominant theoretical orientations to the reading process--top-down and bottom-up--as well as two very different curricular views that are associated with the teaching of reading--skills-based and literature-based--were reviewed. Each belief system offers unique and important implications for the teaching and learning of reading. Other theoretical models of the reading process and their consequential modes of instruction also exist, as illustrated in the continuum depicted in Figure 2.5. The various points on this continuum represent the wide span of possible variations of reading processes, each unique to its own set of characteristics. The theoretical constructs under investigation in this study are located at opposite poles of the continuum as identified by the bold print.

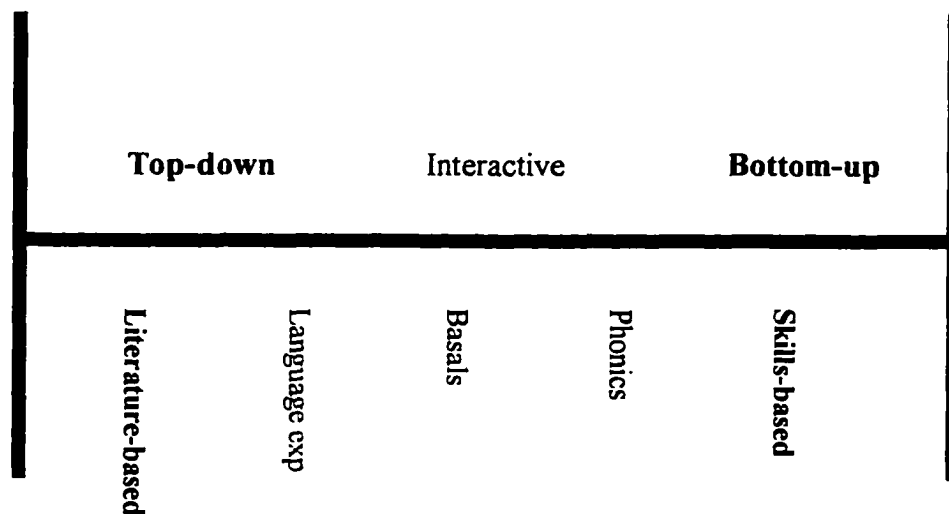


Figure 2.5.  
Theoretical orientations continuum.

### **Teachers' Beliefs and Practices**

The National Institute Of Education produced a report in 1975 that enunciated the need for research on teachers' thought processes (educational beliefs) as evident in the following report statement:

It is obvious that what teachers do is directed in no small measure by what they think. Moreover, it will be necessary for any innovations in the context, practices, and technology of teaching to be mediated through the minds and motives of teachers . . . if teaching is done ... by human teachers, the question of the relationships between thought and action becomes crucial. (p. 1)

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices has increasingly attracted attention in recent years. Research on teacher thinking makes the following assumptions: (a) practice is greatly influenced by teacher thinking, (b) teaching is guided by thoughts and judgments, and (b) teaching is a high-level decision-making process (Isenberg, 1990). Research also suggests that teachers' thinking constitutes a large part of the psychological context of teaching and that practice is "substantially influenced and even determined by teachers' underlying thinking" (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 255).

Many people have proposed or supposed the relationship between what teachers believe about how reading takes place and how they develop it in their classrooms, but empirical investigation of it has been limited and is relatively new (Pace & Powers, 1981). Research in this area of teachers' beliefs and practices often relies on the use of instruments such as a set of statements about reading and reading instruction. These instruments may differ in format, style, and analysis; but researchers feel that they are somewhat indicative of teachers' beliefs (DeFord, 1985; Kinzer, 1988; Leu & Kinzer, 1987; Leu & Kinzer, 1991). Kamil and Pearson (1979) contended that "every

teacher operates with at least an implicit model of reading and to discover what model it is, we need only to observe him teach for a period of time” (p. 10). The method(s) used for investigating and determining teacher beliefs and practices, however, is not as important as the results it produces.

Some of the studies conducted have shown a strong and direct connection between what teachers believe and what they actually practice, while others found factors other than theoretical orientations to be major determinants of how teachers teach reading. The purpose of this section is to review recent research based on the relationship between teachers’ theoretical orientation about reading and their reading instructional practices. The first section explores studies that reflect a direct relationship between teacher beliefs and practices, while the second part presents studies that indicate a more indirect correlation among theoretical orientations.

### Direct Relationships

The following studies differ in purpose, method, and content; yet all substantiate the theory that teachers act in accordance with their knowledge of theoretical aspects about what they teach.

Putnam (1983), in conjunction with a research associate, observed 169 hours in six kindergarten classrooms. Three of the teachers professed a belief in and utilized an approach consistent with a bottom-up view of reading. The other three stated a belief in and used an approach consistent with a top-down view of reading. Teachers with a bottom-up theoretical orientation focused their lessons on subskills such as auditory and visual discrimination, letter-naming, and sound-symbol correspondence. The classrooms were very structured with the teacher retaining tight control. The teachers

who possessed a top-down theoretical orientation emphasized the creation of an environment in which students read books and reacted to them with discussion, art projects, and drama. The instructional activities encouraged the children to work together and allowed them a greater degree of control, choice, and responsibility in their learning. The study revealed extreme consistency in the teachers' stated theoretical model and practices demonstrated in their classroom instruction. Putnam concluded that their orientation about reading not only determined their instructional practices but also their classroom management.

Gove (1981) examined the extent to which primary grade teachers' conceptual views of reading influenced their instructional decision-making. The participants were surveyed and interviewed in order to determine their conceptual framework of reading, bottom-up or top-down. The subjects were then videotaped instructing readers in a direct oral reading session. Analysis revealed that teachers with a bottom-up belief system emphasized decoding skills while teachers who possessed top-down beliefs emphasized higher order language units in their instruction.

Watson (1984) studied two teachers, one skills-oriented and one whole-language-oriented, after their instructional orientation was stated and confirmed by DeFord's *Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile*. Data were collected from videotapes of classroom reading instruction and teacher journals. Findings showed that in every category of observable data, the teachers closely adhered to their theoretical model.

Smith and Shepard (1988) investigated kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices relative to readiness skills. Interviews revealed that teachers had strong beliefs

in and against nativism, the development of school readiness as an internal, organismic process unrelated to environmental intervention. The beliefs of the teachers may have been different, yet the study showed extreme congruency among their beliefs and practices implemented within the classrooms.

Chambers (1989) explored relationships between fourth grade teachers' beliefs about reading comprehension and comprehension instruction. Teachers were interviewed with the *Knowledge Beliefs About Reading and Comprehension Interview* to determine their theoretical process belief and then observed for 12 days during classroom reading instruction to determine instructional belief construct. Based on this data, he concluded that teachers' beliefs and knowledge about reading comprehension shape their instructional decisions.

Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) also explored the relationship between beliefs and comprehension practice. The 38 elementary teachers in the study were interviewed to elicit their beliefs about reading comprehension and how children learn to read, in general. The teachers were then observed to see if their approach to teaching reading comprehension was consistent with their stated beliefs. The study resulted in a finding that the beliefs of teachers do relate to their instructional practices in the teaching of comprehension.

Readence, Konopak, and Wilson (1991) conducted a study with inservice and preservice secondary content area teachers. The results demonstrated an interesting finding--a relationship between beliefs and practices of inservice teachers was much more consistent than with preservice teachers.

Lehman, Allen and Freeman (1990) used questionnaires to determine the congruency between elementary teachers' perceptions and practices regarding literature-based instruction. Using the teachers' beliefs as predictors, the researchers adopted an analysis procedure which indicated that teachers' beliefs could predict their instructional practices, and results showed a definite correlation between beliefs and practice.

Stipek, Daniels, Galluzzo, and Milburn (1992) conducted a study that focused on social, emotional, and academic effects of instructional practices with preschool and kindergarten children. Teachers responded to a questionnaire which measured their beliefs regarding instructional practices, then underwent observations to judge actual practices employed. The study resulted in a measurable level of agreement between beliefs and practices.

Novice teachers were the subjects of a 1995 longitudinal study conducted by Bednar. The teachers' reading beliefs and practices were identified using a variety of approaches including lesson plan reviews, informal discussions, and a taped classroom lesson. Results indicated a significant correlation between the reading beliefs stated by the teacher and behaviors demonstrated in the classroom observations.

McGee and Tompkins (1995) studied the relationship between beliefs and instruction of four elementary teachers via personal reflections and lesson plan critiques. Each teacher reflected on their theoretical perspective toward reading instruction prior to developing a lesson plan for using a specific story for instruction. The researchers then framed each lesson plan and reflections within a theoretical orientation toward reading instruction. The analyzed plans showed a wide variance of

instructional techniques even though the same story was used by each teacher.

However, the variances were consistent with each teachers' articulated beliefs about reading and literature instruction.

Tidwell and Stele (1995) conducted a study with nine elementary school teachers who were just beginning implementation of a whole language program. A belief-based interview was developed to measure teachers' beliefs regarding the whole language philosophy of instruction. Results placed teachers on a continuum that gauged their understanding and beliefs about whole language, its philosophy and strategies. Study conclusions revealed a contrast in teachers' understanding of whole language philosophy and appropriate practices but a direct relationship between what they believed (right or wrong) and practices they would choose in their instruction.

Maxson (1995) conducted a multiple case study of first grade teachers to examine the influence of teachers' beliefs on literacy instruction for at-risk first graders. Individual data were collected from a multitude of sources during an academic school year. Teachers completed a reading inventory, were interviewed, and participated in reflective discussions in order to establish their reading philosophy. Classroom observations provided the researcher with opportunities to identify pedagogical strategies implemented in the classroom. Results showed that teachers do hold specific beliefs about early literacy instruction and that their pedagogical beliefs were actualized in their classroom practices.

A study of three language arts teachers conducted by Gordon (1996) resulted in mixed results. The three teachers articulated their beliefs regarding theoretical approaches to teaching writing prior to being observed in the classroom. Two of the

three teacher observations revealed a consistency between stated beliefs and teaching practices in writing instruction.

Seven secondary English teachers in Australia were the subjects of a 1996 study conducted by Gleeson and Prain. To measure the teachers' beliefs and practices about the teaching of writing, each teacher completed a questionnaire, participated in two interviews, and underwent a classroom observation. All seven teachers expressed beliefs in the importance of providing initial stimuli to introduce writing activities and create student interest, as well as the importance of instructional modeling. The teachers, however, varied somewhat in their beliefs regarding teacher intervention and interaction in the writing process, yet all demonstrated consistency between their stated beliefs and practices observed in the classroom observations.

The studies reviewed to this point reflect findings indicative of a positive relationship between teachers' beliefs of the reading process and their instructional practices. These findings are important in the sense that if theoretical orientation is a major determinant of how teachers act during reading instruction, then teacher educators and staff developers can affect classroom practice by inducing the development of theoretical orientations reflective of current and pertinent research in the field.

### Indirect Relationships

The studies that follow have produced results that indicate disparity in the relationship between theoretical orientation and practice in the teaching and learning of reading. This does not necessarily mean that there is no connection, but perhaps other factors intervene in the theory-practice equation.



Martonicik (1981) conducted six case studies of primary teachers to determine if there was a relationship between teachers' theoretical orientations to reading and their classroom verbal cuing behavior. Two teachers from each conceptional belief--phonics, skills, and whole language--were observed and taped during 4 days of reading instruction. Each teacher was then interviewed in order to clarify rationales for using specific practices. Results suggested that external variables were more influential than internal variables on instructional practices; therefore, teachers' use of verbal cues did not reflect their theoretical orientations.

Hoffman and Kugle (1981) observed second and third grade teachers during guided oral reading activities to assess the relationship between their beliefs and verbal feedback practices demonstrated during the activity. Samples of teachers' verbal feedback were taken from video and audiotaped group oral reading sessions. After the tapes were analyzed and coded, the participating teachers completed surveys to assess their theoretical orientation. Results showed a significant variation between teachers' stated beliefs about guided oral reading and feedback given to readers. However, it was suggested that their beliefs may not have been adequately founded due to the inconsistencies in responses made by the teachers during the interview process.

Kinzer (1988) investigated the belief systems of preservice and inservice elementary reading teachers to discover whether experience affected consistency between teacher beliefs and practices. He administered identical instruments to 83 preservice and 44 inservice teachers. The instruments consisted of two sets of 15 statements designed to measure beliefs on how reading develops and on how reading takes place. The participants chose among three sets of lesson plans to compare

orientation with choice of instruction. Kinzer concluded that both groups with reader-based/holistic explanations tend to choose lessons reflective of their beliefs. On the contrary, those teachers with text-based, interactive, and differential acquisition explanations did not choose plans consistent with their beliefs. The inconsistency in the study results in a disparity between beliefs and practices; however, the focus was also on the effect experience had on beliefs, and it appeared that this inconsistency might be due to unsure theoretical orientations, not experience.

Levande (1989) investigated the extent to which reading teachers behave in ways consistent with their self-reported belief systems. The study involved a theoretical orientation survey of about 50 teachers followed by observations and interviews of a smaller sample randomly selected from the initial respondents. Levande found that a majority (53%) of the subjects taught in ways inconsistent with their theoretical beliefs. Teachers cited administrative policies as the major reason for the discrepancy.

Mitchell (1990) examined Chapter 1 teachers' theoretical orientations and their relationship to pedagogical practices via surveys, observations, and daily interviews. Twenty-three were surveyed and four were then chosen to undergo the observation and interview process. Analysis of results found several inconsistencies among the teachers' stated beliefs, preactive planning, and interactive decision-making.

Spidell-Rusher, McGrevin, and Lambiotte's 1992 study of teachers' beliefs regarding developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices produced interesting results. Teachers responding to a belief questionnaire and then an interview revealed how they perceived their classroom practices to be congruent with their beliefs. Results indicated that teachers were knowledgeable and in favor of developmentally

appropriate practices but felt that emphasis on direct skill development forced them to teach in an inappropriate manner.

Wilson, Konopak, and Readence (1992) examined a secondary English teacher's beliefs, plans, and instruction regarding content area reading. Data collection included Kinzer's (1988) packet of belief statements and lesson plans, modified by Readence *et al.* (1991), as well as interviews, lesson plans, and observations. The teacher's belief statements supported the implementation of a variety of strategies in reading instruction, yet her instructional approach was primarily teacher directed. Her belief statements also indicated a belief in the integration of reading and writing, yet the only writing activities observed involved answering worksheet questions. Therefore, the authors concluded that there were several inconsistencies between the teacher's beliefs and practices.

Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, Mosely, and Fleege (1993) conducted a follow-up to their 1991 study of kindergarten beliefs and practices related to developmentally appropriate guidelines. The study produced two instruments--belief questionnaire and observation checklist. The first was designed to identify key teachers who appear to be more developmentally appropriate in their beliefs about classroom instruction. The second provided ratings of actual practices utilized within the classroom setting. Conclusions from the study revealed that teachers' professed beliefs of developmentally appropriate practices were stronger than what was reflected in their classroom activities.

Scharer (1993) investigated teachers' beliefs and practices concerning literature-based instruction in first through fifth grade classrooms. Findings of this

study suggested that teachers' definitions of literature-based reading emphasized availability of materials and resources, rather than emphasizing a theoretical orientation toward literacy.

Fogleman (1995) conducted a study with middle school language arts teachers as a similar replication of Kinzer's study of 1988. In contrast to Kinzer's study, Fogelman found that the reader-based participants and the text-based participants were inconsistent with their beliefs and strategies.

Gordon's study of 1996 was mentioned previously under the section "direct relationships" but also must be reiterated in this discussion in one area of disparity. One of the three language arts teachers observed demonstrated an inconsistency between his expressed beliefs about the teaching of writing and the practices conducted in the classroom.

To date, the most extensive investigations of teacher beliefs and their relationship to practice have been those conducted as part of the Conceptions of Reading Project at the Institute for Research on Teaching of Michigan State University (Bawden, 1979; Duffy, 1977; Duffy & Anderson, 1982; Duffy & Ball, 1986). This project used two assessment methods to assess teachers' conceptions of reading: (a) an inventory to determine if teachers think conceptually about reading and (b) a field study to aid in observation of instructional practices. The two sets of data were then compared to determine whether the teachers' observed pedagogical practices reflected a particular conception. The results showed that teachers did have identifiable conceptions of reading, but their statements conveyed multiple ideas about reading and decision-making.

### Summary

In summary, studies of belief-practice relationships in the teaching of reading have produced inconclusive findings regarding the extent and manner in which classroom practice is influenced by theoretical orientation. Findings seem to indicate that teachers' literacy instructional decisions are influenced by multiple factors, such as administrative policies, teacher experience, teacher background, and resource availability. However, it is evident that teachers' beliefs do appear to be an integral part of classroom practices.

### **Summary**

In the review of the literature, I have provided a narrative on specified theoretical orientations to reading, both process and instruction. A relationship between the orientations was also presented in order to better examine both aspects of teachers' belief systems and thus attempt to determine the impact of teacher beliefs on instructional practices.

Teachers develop curriculum in various ways based on their ideas of the reading process and the specific contexts in which they teach. A complex relationship exists regarding the connection between theory and practice in the teaching and learning of reading due to the multitude of factors that intervene in instructional classroom decision-making. A congruency between what teachers believe about how reading takes place and the practices they employ in the classroom in order to develop reading is, however, a dominant factor in the creation of an effective learning environment.

Routman (1991) states that the key to providing effective literacy instruction is not exclusively found in different classroom programs or approaches. She believes that

the key resides with informed teachers who critically reflect on theory and practice to provide the most powerful instruction in order to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms. Short and Burke (1996) are in full compliance with this belief as evident in their statement that anytime teachers or other educators engage in curriculum inquiry one must first examine and reflect on the congruency between beliefs and actions in the classroom.

This realization then intensifies the need for teacher educators and staff developers to induce the development of theoretical orientations reflective of current and pertinent research in the field of reading in order to effectively influence classroom practices. Additionally, it is of major importance to continue to study teachers' beliefs in order to better understand why teachers do what they do in the classroom and thus begin an enlightened process of improved reading instruction in early literacy settings.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The impetus behind this study was my desire to better understand the correlation between teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading and the instructional practices they demonstrate in the classroom. Quantitative methodology has been the dominant paradigm of educational research, yet qualitative or naturalistic research has recently gained acceptance as a legitimate method of educational inquiry (Young, 1986). Schunk (1991) suggests that although quantitative methods have typically been used, qualitative methods, such as case studies, are needed to gain additional insights. Munby (1982, 1984) suggests that qualitative research methodology is especially appropriate to the study of beliefs.

The research question(s) of a study often drives the chosen form of methodology. Qualitative studies, however, allow one to do more than simply observe and gather data; they enable the researcher the opportunity to become an active participant in the process. This involvement component, coupled with the fact that this study was designed to obtain information on teachers' beliefs and how these were operationalized into classroom settings, reflected the appropriateness of a qualitative research design. Other characteristics of qualitative methodology which also strengthened the attraction to utilize this form of inquiry were:

1. The study was conducted in a natural setting, and the researcher's insights were the key to analysis.
2. It was descriptive, and the data were collected in the form of words instead of numbers.
3. The researcher was concerned with a process, rather than simply a product.
4. Data were analyzed inductively, as themes and patterns emerged.
5. Meaning was at the center of this approach. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992)

The individual case study has emerged as one of the primary models of description for naturalistic or ethnographical inquiry (Guba, 1988). This approach has been useful in helping educational researchers understand the rationale behind numerous instructional issues. Bussis, Chittenden, and Amarel (1976) have demonstrated that this type of study is helpful in understanding the socio-cultural and organizational factors that influence teachers and instructional methodologies of teaching. By providing a portrait of individual educators, case studies can provide a contextual view of the subtleties that influence behavior and thus help us better understand the complexity of the reading process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline additional advantages of case studies:

1. They demonstrate the interplay between the researcher and participants.
2. They provide the reader an opportunity to scrutinize for internal consistency and trustworthiness.
3. They provide "thick description" and help the reader make judgments of transferability.



4. They communicate information about context that is grounded in the particular setting being studied.

This study employed the multiple-case design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which allowed for comparing and contrasting participants in order to better understand each subject in depth. By focusing on multiple cases, I was able to enhance my understanding of the complexities involved in teachers' theoretical orientations and the role they play in decision-making of instructional practices. Stake (1994) indicates that case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of the object of study. In summary, this research inquiry employed a qualitative research design with the individual case studies as the focus.

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study was built around three major methods of data collection-- surveys, interviews, and observations. The following sections describe the procedures that were utilized in the study. Of course, the procedures described were flexible, as one characteristic of naturalistic inquiry is that of an emergent design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that investigators may enter the research with some idea about what they will do, but a detailed set of procedures is not formed prior to data collection.

An overall plan of the study is presented first, then followed by more detailed procedures and rationales for each phase of the study. Explanations and/or descriptions of such qualitative components as rigor, trustworthiness, triangulation, and generalizability are discussed within context as applicable, then discussed later in isolation, as needed.

### Overall Plan

The overall research plan included data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings. Prior to official collection of data, permission was obtained to conduct the study with teachers employed in the educational system of Blume Parish. Table 3.1 represents a graphic overview of the research timeline and procedures utilized throughout the three research phases.

The section on data collection was segmented into three major phases. Phase 1 of the study utilized surveys to deal with the initial selection of participants. The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) (see Appendix A) developed by DeFord (1979, 1985) was designed to assess the theoretical orientation to reading held by educators. All first through third grade teachers in Blume Parish received the TORP and an invitation/explanatory letter (see Appendix B) to participate in the study. The returned surveys were scored and participants were chosen to continue in the study.

DeFord (1985) recommended that other sources of data, such as interviews, be used in conjunction with the TORP to confirm teacher orientation. Therefore, Phase 2 of the research design was comprised of participant interviews conducted at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year. The 18 teachers whose TORP responses indicated a strong preference for literature-based or skills-based instruction were interviewed to determine their beliefs regarding the reading process in reference to a bottom-up or top-down theoretical orientation. The *Reading Belief Interview* (see Appendix C) was used as the basis of the interview process. Four participants who appeared to hold strong top-down literature-based or bottom-up skills-based theoretical orientations were chosen for further study.

TABLE 3.1  
Research Timeline and Procedures

Phases	Timeline	Procedure	Evaluation
Field entry	May 1997	Obtain access Negotiate role as researcher	Permission letters
PHASE 1 Surveys	May-July 1997	Prepare materials Establish entrance to school setting Mail surveys Score surveys	TORP surveys Informal visits  TORP analysis
PHASE 2 Interviews	July 1997	Select participants Prepare materials Develop interview schedule	Survey results RBI forms Schedule
	August 1997	Conduct interviews  Score interviews	Reading Beliefs Inventory Field notes Audiotapes Inventory analysis
PHASE 3 Observations	September-December 1997	Select participants  Establish entrance  Develop observation log Observe teachers  Collect/analyze data	Survey and interview results Informal visits Parent meeting if requested Observation log Formal visits Participant observer Field notes Videotapes Member checking Peer debriefing Reflective journals

In Phase 3 of the study, four teachers selected from Phase 2 were chosen to undergo the observation process. Representation of teachers from each early literacy grade level, first through third, were considered; but final participant selection was based on the strength of the teachers' belief systems relative to top-down literature-based and bottom-up skills-based models. These teachers were each observed a minimum of 9 hours within the first semester of the school year, in order to gather data regarding instructional practices actually implemented in their respective classrooms.

The multiple case design of the study required a cross-case analysis (Yin, 1980) to assist in explanation of recurring themes and patterns. The constant comparative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was utilized to aid in theory development of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. Findings are described as individual cases, then conclusions are derived from the overall results are reported.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Phase 1**

##### **Participants**

All first, second, and third grade teachers teaching in the Blume Parish public and private schools were asked to participate in the first stage of the study.

Participation, however, was strictly voluntary. This population included every primary grade regular education teacher in the system--a total of 64 teachers.

##### **Surveys**

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) was chosen for the initial stage of participant selection because it could easily be used with a large number of subjects, and it generated scores which could easily be analyzed. The TORP is a

28- item survey instrument developed and validated by DeFord (1979, 1985) that uses a Likert Scale to determine teacher theoretical orientations to reading. To complete the survey, the respondent circles a number from 1 to 5 to indicate the extent of agreement with the item statement. The profile yields a total score regarding a respondent's beliefs associated with phonics (0-65), skills (65-110), and whole language (110-140) instructional practices. Although the TORP has limitations in its use, it is appropriate as a general screening instrument. The TORP has been used extensively since its development and is considered as a reliable and valid indicator of respondents' beliefs regarding the reading process (Scheffler, Richmond, & Kazelskis, 1993).

### Procedures

Prior to formally beginning Phase I of the study, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the superintendent of the Blume Parish School Board (see Appendix D), as well as from the principal of each of the eight possible school sites (see Appendix E). Once permission was granted, the TORP, along with an invitation/explanatory letter, was sent to each of the 64 classroom teachers. The teachers were instructed to complete the inventory in the manner prescribed by DeFord (1985) in order to avoid influencing their responses. Teachers were also asked to force themselves to make a decision on items which they might find difficult to answer. Ethical issues, such as individual rights to dignity, privacy, confidentiality and avoidance of harm (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Yin, 1980), were considered. Therefore, the teachers were assured that their responses were confidential and that their names were needed only for survey accounting purposes and in the event they were asked to continue.

The surveys that were returned were checked for completeness of data and availability of respondents. A total of 8 surveys were eliminated for various reasons, including teacher transfers to noneligible grades or positions, teacher retirement, and incomplete data. The remaining 29 surveys were scored in order to determine where each participant's belief system fell on an instructional continuum--literature-based to skill-based. Specific guidelines for tallying the scores on the TORP are provided with the instrument, and a score range indicates the teachers' theoretical orientation regarding classroom reading practices. Table 3.2 summarizes the number of teachers who were categorized within each theoretical construct.

TABLE 3.2  
Frequency of Responses of TORP

Phonics	Skills	Whole Language
4	22	3

Teachers whose scores did not indicate a strong belief on either end of the continuum were eliminated from future study. The remaining 18 subjects were grouped by grade level of instruction and degree of belief system commitment and asked to participate in the next phase of the study. An attempt was made to include teachers from each grade level of instruction and from each instructional stance (literature-based and skills-based), but final representation was based on the teachers' degree of belief commitment and their willingness to participate. This did not alter the study, as the purpose was not to see which belief was the strongest or most prevalent at what

grade level but to determine the impact of teacher beliefs on classroom practices, in general.

## Phase 2

### Participants

The 18 teachers chosen in Phase 1 were interviewed via a written interview instrument and an oral personal interview. The participants were selected using the following primary criteria: (a) willingness to be interviewed and (b) scores on the TORP. Level of instruction was considered and representation of each grade level, first through third, was included, but representation was not based on an equal standard rather on the primary criteria previously mentioned.

### Interviews

The Reading Beliefs Interview (see Appendix C) is a modified version of The Beliefs About Reading Interview (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1995). The difference between the instruments is the addition of several questions. I added questions that were designed to help establish rapport and make the teacher feel more at ease with the process. The Reading Beliefs Interview was used for a variety of reasons:

1. The instrument format provides for utilization of both personal reflection and oral interview.
2. The scoring guide provides for easy analysis.
3. The instrument serves as an excellent complement to the TORP in examining the relationship between beliefs about reading and instructional practices.

The Reading Beliefs Interview consists of questions designed to elicit beliefs about the main sequence of processing of linguistic units during the learning-to-read

process, the allocation of time to instructional activities, the importance placed on decoding print and comprehension, and the evaluation of ability. The Reading Beliefs Interview yields an overall rating of a teacher's conceptual framework of reading based on four levels: (a) strong bottom-up, (b) moderate bottom-up, (c) moderate top-down, and (d) strong top-down. This score provides a general indication of where the teacher's beliefs about the reading process fall on the continuum reflective of bottom-up and top-down models of reading.

### Procedures

The interview was not the dominant strategy for data collection, yet it was a valuable research instrument as illustrated in this statement by Bussis *et al.* (1976, p. 15):

The strength of an interview lies in its ability to elicit personal opinions, knowledge, understandings, attitudes, and the like, and accumulated evidence of this nature does provide adequate support for reconstructing a general picture of the construct systems. Any two teachers will necessarily differ in the specifics of their accounts...but the general understanding they reveal in these accounts may be quite similar.

The general interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) was used to collect the interview data. This approach outlines a set of information to be explained that serves as a checklist for items to be covered, as evident in The Reading Beliefs Interview. The interviewer is free to build a conversation within a particular subject area or issue, but the focus remains predetermined.

Good interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view (Briggs, 1986). Prior to the interviews in this study, the teachers were asked to preview the results from the TORP for accuracy and were allowed an



opportunity to clarify any issues deemed necessary. The participants were then given a copy of the Reading Beliefs Interview, and a date for the oral interview was scheduled. The interviews were conducted at a time and location convenient for the participants with most occurring in the interviewees' classrooms after school hours. The duration of the interview varied among participants but averaged around 30 minutes. The interviews were audiotaped for the sole purpose of aiding in the transcription of field notes, if needed.

The interviews were scored to determine teachers' beliefs regarding the reading process in reference to bottom-up and top-down construct systems. The scores were obtained by comparing the teachers' responses to each interview probe with the summary statements provided with the instrument. The interviews were rated in two ways: (a) ratings based on the teacher's descriptions of behaviors and the rationales for these behaviors and (b) ratings based on the assumptions about reading acquisition mentioned by the teacher. Table 3.3 summarizes the number of teachers who were categorized within each of the four levels provided on the beliefs about reading continuum.

TABLE 3.3

Frequency of Responses on the Reading Belief Interview

Strong Bottom-up	Moderate Bottom-up	Moderate Top-down	Strong Top-down
6	8	3	1

Results from the interview were then matched with TORP results in order to determine the participants who hold strong top-down literature-based and bottom-up skills-based theoretical orientations. Four teachers, two from each theoretical construct, who demonstrated a high compatible score on each instrument were chosen to continue the study. Table 3.4 provides a graphic view of the theoretical orientations of the final participants, as identified in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

TABLE 3.4  
Theoretical Comparisons of Final Participants

Participants	Process Construct	Instructional Construct
M. Doe	Moderate top-down	Literature-based
S. Jones	Strong top-down	Literature-based
M. Lee	Strong bottom-up	Skills-based
S. Hill	Moderate bottom-up	Skills-based

### Phase 3

#### Participants

Four teachers participated in Phase 3 of the study. The teachers were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Willingness to participate.
2. Responses of clear rationales explaining why they follow specific practices regarding the learning-to-read process.
3. Statements given in Phase 2 that indicated an awareness of two positions toward reading instruction and a commitment to one of them.

A meeting was held with each selectee to clarify the requirements and responsibilities of continuing in the study and to receive written confirmation of their participation (see Appendix F).

All participants taught self-contained classrooms in three rural schools located throughout the school district. Each school was identified as a Title I school due to the high degree of economic deprivation, identified by free and reduced lunch participation. The school system used a one basal reader program but did allow individual schools and teachers to supplement the program, if desired. Specific characteristics about each participant are outlined in Table 3.5 and are further described in the subsequent chapters.

TABLE 3.5

Phase 3 Participant Characteristics

Teachers	Grade	Age	Experience	Degree	Orientations
M. Doe	3	30-40	10 years	BA	TD/Lit-based
S. Jones	1	20-30	10 years	BS	TD/Lit-based
M. Lee	2	30-40	11 years	MA +30	BU/Skill-based
S. Hill	2	30-40	13 years	MA	BU/Skill-based

Observations

Participant observation is a particular mode of observation in which the researcher assumes a variety of roles within a case study situation and may participate in some of the events being studied (Yin, 1994). As participant observer, I attempted to

capture a word picture of the setting, teacher, and students in order to understand instructional practices used by the teachers.

In this study classroom observations provided first-hand information regarding the pedagogical strategies that the teachers implemented when teaching students to read. Spradley (1980) identifies three types of observations used in qualitative research --descriptive, focused, and selective. Descriptive observations portray a broad range of events that happen in the setting and are used primarily in the beginning stages of inquiry. Focused observations direct the researcher's attention to a deeper and narrower portion of the research content and provide opportunities for the researcher to form themes and categories. Selective observations allow the researcher to focus on refining the characteristics of and relationships among the emerging objects of study. An initial videotaped observation of a complete instructional day provided a descriptive look into those classrooms under study. A minimum of 6 hours of focused observation was spent with each of the four teachers, followed by two or three additional observations which were designed to observe specific areas needing clarification or confirmation.

Field notes were the primary recording tool used in this phase, as they serve as a written account of what the researcher sees, hears, experiences, and thinks in the process of collecting and reflecting on collected data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As participant observer, I attempted to observe and reflect on any individual, area, or obstacle that might affect the teachers' instruction. The field notes included descriptions of observed classroom behaviors as well as my personal reflections on the research. Additional sources of data (daily class schedule, assessment instruments, lesson plans, student work, key informants) were gathered throughout the study to help provide

additional insight into the teachers' philosophy of teaching and learning. Lesson plans that accompanied the actual observation, as well as those preceding and following the observation, were reviewed.

### Procedures

Prior to classroom observations, parents of all the children in the participants' classrooms were invited to a meeting designed to provide explanations regarding the purpose of the research and to answer any questions. Parent permission letters (see Appendix G) were obtained from all the students' parents so that I could interview, photograph, or tape record the children, if needed. Children present special rapport challenges (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988); therefore, the first observation, per teacher, consisted of a "get acquainted time." Descriptive field notes were not gathered in this initial observation, but reflective notes were included. During this visit, I was introduced to the children, explained my current and future visits, and allowed the children to ask any questions they might have.

Classroom observations, six to seven per teacher, occurred over a period of several months. An initial full-day observation was conducted via direct observation and videotaping. The researcher set up the video equipment, stayed for a period of observation, then departed from the classroom, returning periodically throughout the day for "snapshot" observations. A minimum of three additional observations were conducted during language arts instruction. Two additional observations were made at various times throughout the school day, in order to clarify emerging themes and to observe various literacy activities that occurred at times other than the regularly scheduled "reading block."

Through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, the researcher builds trust among the participants, establishes emerging themes, and determines consistencies and inconsistencies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study all observations were recorded in a specially designed binder that included an area for field notes and a log sheet designed to include such things as time frames, activities, class arrangement, teacher and student behaviors, quotes, reflections, and other pertinent information. The log provided a structure to the observations, assured some consistency from visit to visit, and provided a way of categorizing specific instructional behaviors. Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data. The search for emergent themes is a recursive activity through which a descriptive picture emerges.

Study participants served as member checkers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They each received a copy of the field notes for their review within a few days of each observation. The notes were reviewed, and needed changes were discussed in order to accurately reflect the research situation and eliminate researcher bias. A comprehensive member check was done when the final report was completed in order to strengthen the credibility of the research.

### Summary

Data collection for the study consisted primarily of surveys, interviews, and observations. By collecting and confirming data through multiple sources (triangulation of data), I was able to compensate for the limitations of one technique, verify data, and better establish emerging themes and patterns, while establishing trustworthiness in the findings. Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checking also

enhanced the credibility of the findings and interpretations of each of the three phases of data collection.

Phase 1 was designed to screen teachers, via the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile, concerning their belief systems about the value of specific reading instructional practices (literature-based and skills-based). The Reading Beliefs Interview was used in Phase 2 to determine the extent to which the bottom-up and top-down conceptual frameworks of reading were implicit construct systems held by participants. The purpose of Phase 3 was to observe teachers and explore the relationship between their constructs of the learning-to-read process and their reading instructional practices. A compilation of information obtained from the three phases of data collection resulted in adequate data for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

A cross-case analysis was utilized according to qualitative methodology. Patton (1990) states that analysis of data requires a review of all field notes, organization of the data, and an intensive study for emergent themes and linkages between patterns in the data. I grouped data from different teachers' responses on survey and interview questions as well as observations, in order to sort, code, categorize, and analyze their different perspectives on the reading process and instruction. Recurring themes and patterns were explored to formulate questions and develop case studies.

A central feature of qualitative analysis is the constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method of analysis consists of six steps that occur simultaneously in a recursive fashion where data are collected, coded, categorized, and analyzed continually throughout the study. The data collected from the surveys,

interviews, and observations were analyzed using this method. This allowed me to develop my own theory of the relationship between teachers' orientations of the reading process and instructional practices.

Traditional research argues that the only way to produce valid information is through a rigorous research methodology, that is, one that follows a strict set of objective procedures. The qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns emerge from the data rather than being preimposed. This does not mean, however, that rigor is not an important part of qualitative research. It simply means that perhaps the use of a more appropriate term, such as trustworthiness, should be used in the context of critical research. The elements of trustworthiness were established in this study through issues of credibility--triangulation of data, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checking, peer debriefing, and auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Sustained engagement and persistent observation were components of this study as I became a participant observer that made me a member of the classroom environment. The four teachers who were the subjects of the study served as member checkers. They received copies of the field notes after observations and discussed areas of misrepresentation. Each participant also received a copy of the final analysis of their overall case study and participated in an informal interview to discuss the report.

Dependability and confirmability are other components of trustworthiness. I left an extensive audit trail through the use of field notes, a reflective journal, and instrument development information. A peer debriefer and external auditor continued



the process of trustworthiness and added credibility to the study. Throughout the research process, the peer debriefer read field notes, discussed and debated the working hypothesis, probed for bias, helped define categories, and served as a knowledgeable person to assist me with concerns and questions. My peer debriefer was a second grade teacher with 22 years of experience teaching in the elementary grades. She has a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction and was familiar with qualitative methodology.

An external auditor continues the process of trustworthiness by conducting a review of the study to check that research findings were grounded in the data, inferences were logical, and the study was free of bias. My external auditor was the assistant graduate dean from one of the area universities who had extensive background knowledge and experience in qualitative research.

Generalizability, or transferability (as more frequently used in ethnographic studies), relates to the ability to transfer the information from the context of the study to another context. The degree of transferability depends on the degree of similarity between the contexts in question, and this cannot be known by the researcher. Therefore, I provided a study rich in descriptive data and left the determination of the transferability of the findings to those who wish to apply them to other settings.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative study was designed to examine the impact of teacher beliefs as they relate to early literacy instruction. The research design used for the study produced significant conclusions regarding the relationship of teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading and how they are operationalized into classroom practices. Such insights could have a major impact on the teaching and learning of reading as it would assist policy

makers engaged in curricular reform and, more importantly, help teacher educators and staff developers better train preservice and inservice teachers in sound theoretical beliefs. The challenge is to make sure that teachers develop a theoretical understanding of how reading develops and support their beliefs through the development of sound pedagogy that links factors which influence what is done in the classroom. By knowing and understanding why teachers do what they do, we can better help them meet the reading needs of young readers.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CASE STUDIES FRAMEWORK**

#### **Introduction**

The case study has emerged as one of the primary models of description for naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1988) and has been useful in helping researchers better understand the rationale behind numerous instructional issues. This approach allows the participants to present a picture of their professional, and often personal, lives and the effect those lives might have on their teaching practices. The research for this study began at the close of the 1996-97 school year, but in-depth investigation with selected participants did not occur until the beginning of the following school term, August 1997. As each case study developed, I focused on: (a) the teachers' responses, written and oral, concerning what they believed about reading acquisition and development; (b) the teachers' practices implemented in their classrooms; and (c) each teacher's consistencies and inconsistencies between professed beliefs and actual instruction.

The four teachers who were the focus of this research were all primary grade teachers teaching in rural schools within the same school district. They each were responsible for teaching reading via the adopted districtwide basal text and were required to adhere to standard assessment policies set by the district. Even with these restrictions and commonalities, each were unique individuals with their own ideas about teaching and learning.

The individual case studies of the four participants are described in the following chapter. The case studies of the two teachers identified as holding top-down/literature-based orientations to reading are described in the first section of the chapter with the subsequent section presenting the case studies of the two teachers possessing bottom-up/skills-based constructs of reading. This current chapter provides a categorized framework that will be used in reporting the data presented in Chapter 5.

### **Categories**

I identified five broad categories that were essential elements found in each case study. The categories that were used to develop the four case studies are: (a) general characteristics, (b) theoretical orientations, (c) classroom practices, (d) theoretical constructs relationships, and (e) summary/reflections. A definition and/or brief description are provided for each identified category.

#### **General Characteristics**

Research implies that teacher behavior could be affected by factors other than theoretical orientation. Administration mandates, principal leadership, teacher experience and training, classroom management concerns based on student selection and class size, and availability of resources are only a few of the “higher priority” concerns that could affect teacher actions. In order to fully understand each participant, one must understand the entire educational community, its routines, physical environment, beliefs, and other identifying factors. The General Characteristics section of each case study provides a narrative description of some of the major components that could directly affect the classroom learning environment. Each of these

components--the school, the teacher, the students, and the classroom--are addressed to assist in identifying factors, if any, that could affect the teachers' choice of instructional practices.

### Theoretical Orientations

The beliefs that teachers hold about reading and reading instruction are believed by some to directly guide ones' instructional decision making. This category examines the teachers' theoretical beliefs regarding both the acquisition and development of the learning-to-read process. Research in this area often relies on the use of some type of instrument to determine the belief constructs of the study participants. Instruments implemented in this current study included a survey and a personal interview which allowed me to focus on each teachers' responses about what she believed.

### Orientations of the Reading Process

To elicit beliefs about the reading process, a guided interview was conducted using the Reading Belief Interview. The interview instrument consisted of 10 questions that required the participants to describe desired teacher behaviors and to provide rationales for these behaviors. The choice of instructional procedures utilized by the teacher is important, but it is the rationale for how and when they use it that is most reflective of their conceptualization of reading. The responses were scored according to criteria that identified top-down or bottom-up processing (see Appendix H). A final tally of responses identified teachers as holding one of the following conceptual frameworks: (a) strong bottom-up (zero or only one top-down response), (b) moderate bottom-up (two to three top-down responses), (c) moderate top-down (two to three bottom-up responses), and (d) strong top-down (zero or one bottom-up response).

Some responses may have resulted in a score of NI (not enough information), but these were probed until enough information was given to result in either a top-down or a bottom-up response.

In bottom-up theories of the reading process, the stimulus for reading is the print on the page; thus, the reader begins with the letters and moves upward to more complex levels of language, in order to glean meaning from the text. This concept is evident when viewing the expected responses to the interview questions as most of them relate directly to vocabulary, decoding, and comprehension issues, as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Top-down reading theories advocate that reading begins with the reader, not the text, and that it is a meaning-construction process, not simply a process of attending to stimuli in the text. Table 4.2 provides suggested interview responses that support this theory that reading should evolve around meaning.

This category provides identification of each participant's theoretical orientation of the learning-to-read process. Drawing from actual interview responses, items 2a-9 of the interview are analyzed and presented individually in order to elicit a more thorough understanding of each teacher's beliefs. This is an important component of this category as it is quite possible that individual item responses might not be consistent with their overall construct.

#### Orientations of Reading Instruction

For this study, the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) was administered to assist in determining the participants' theoretical orientations to reading

TABLE 4.1

Interview Responses Supporting Bottom-Up Orientations.

Item	Interview Probe	Bottom-Up Responses
2a	Oral reading error	Help students sound out the word. Tell students the word and have them repeat .
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Help students sound out the word. Tell them to use word attack skills.
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	Working on skills, phonics, sight vocabulary. Activities focusing on accuracy of word and punctuation usage .
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	(Most important) introduction of vocabulary and development of skills.
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Important to introduce words prior to reading unless strong word attack skills are in place.
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Sound it out. Use word attack skills.
7	Information from testing	Knowledge of word attack skills, sight words, word meanings, visual skills.
8	Instructional goals	Increase student's ability to sound out words, build vocabulary, increase word attack skills.
9	Rationale for best reader	Because it is graphically similar. Because it is a real word and looks similar.

practices. The TORP survey consists of response items concerning beliefs about the value of specific reading instructional practices. It categorizes the respondents' beliefs into one of three broad groups: (a) phonics, (b) skills, and (c) whole language. The total score, which may range from 28 to 140, places the participant along a numeric

TABLE 4.2

Interview Responses Supporting Top-Down Orientations.

Item	Interview Probe	Top-Down Responses
2a	Oral reading error	Ask "does that make sense?" Do not interrupt unless meaning is affected, then have student reread.
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Tell kids to skip the word, go on, come back and see what makes sense. Ask them, "what makes sense and starts with ____?"
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	Reading. Activities focusing on reading, discussion, comprehension, enjoyment.
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	(Most important) setting purposes for reading, reaction to silent reading.
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Words should not be introduced prior to reading because students can often figure out meaning on their own.
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Try to think of word that makes sense. Skip the word. Use context.
7	Information from testing	Test comprehension through the reading of text.
8	Instructional goals	Increase ability to read independently. Increase enjoyment of reading. Improve comprehension.
9	Rationale for best reader	Because it is similar in meaning.



continuum of practices. There are, however, points of overlap as the phonics and skills orientations have a tendency to share practices, as do the skills and literature orientations. The greatest degree of overlap, however, does occur between the skills and phonics orientations.

A study by Gove (1981) examined the degree of overlap between the orientations. She concluded that the phonics and skills orientations overlapped to a degree great enough to warrant the differentiation of only two orientations, phonics/skills and whole language. DeFord (1985) acknowledges that this overlap exists but still advocates the existence of three belief groups.

Another factor that I found to hinder the distinct differentiation of the phonics and skills orientations was the teachers' perceptions of these two terms. In talking to the teachers in this study, I found that most of them viewed phonics as part of skills-based instruction. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following score ranges were used to identify each participant's theoretical belief about reading acquisition: 58 to 102 represented a skills-based framework and 103-140 represented a literature-based construct. In addition to an overall score obtained by following scoring criteria for each item (see Appendix I), specific items on the TORP have been identified for being more indicative of each of the orientations included in this study:

1. Items 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 24, 25, and 28 represent the skills-based orientation.

2. Items 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 23, 26, and 27 represent the literature-based orientation.

Skills-based instruction arises from viewing reading as a set of discrete skills being taught directly and often in isolation. Reading is viewed as a set of broad components consisting of vocabulary, decoding, and comprehension. The rapid and accurate decoding and identification of words, which lead to comprehension, are paramount in this orientation of instruction as illustrated in the TORP items most indicative of this construct (see Table 4.3).

Literature-based reading instruction views reading as one of four integral ways in which language is realized. The systems of language--semantics, syntax, and graphophonics are not only shared in natural contexts but are independent and interactive aspects of the reading process. Meaning is the core in which all literacy skills occur as a natural extension of human language development. This concept is embedded in the TORP items designed to reflect a literature-based orientation (see Table 4.4).

This category provides a description of each participant's overall orientation to reading instruction as well as addresses each of their responses on the specific items most closely related to their identified belief regarding reading practices. This will not only provide insight into their professed belief about reading acquisition but will establish a basis for differentiating areas in which their beliefs might vary in degrees of commitment.

TABLE 4.3

TORP Items Reflecting Skills-Based Instruction

Item	Statement
4	Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.
8	The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.
11	It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.
13	It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.
14	Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.
16	Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).
19	Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho' to graph, pho tog' ra phy, pho to gra phic') should be developed as part of reading instruction.
24	Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.
25	It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.
28	Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped).

The TORP provided information on reading acquisition, while the Reading Beliefs Interview elicited responses covering reading development. Therefore, the information concerning orientations of the reading process coupled with survey data on reading practices provides a good understanding of the teachers' conceptual

TABLE 4.4

TORP Items Reflecting Literature-Based Instruction.

Item	Statement
5	Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.
7	It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.
15	When coming to a word that is unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess as to meaning and go on.
17	It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.
18	Flashcard drill with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.
23	Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.
26	If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.
27	It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.

framework. Data extrapolated from this combination provides coding categories to be compared to actual classroom practices.

Classroom Practices

The observation of teachers in instructional situations has often been viewed as indicative of theoretical orientation. Following the participants' completion of the interview and survey phases of the study, I spent time observing the teachers during

regular reading instruction and periodically during other times of the day. This enabled me to see first-hand the pedagogical strategies and interactions the teachers implemented with their students as they taught them to read. Under this category, observational data for each participant is shared. The data, gathered over a 4-month period of time, depict pedagogical practices utilized during reading/language arts instruction. Some of the participants varied their daily activities to accommodate the needs and interests of the children, while others more consistently adhered to a predetermined schedule. This variance in scheduling, coupled with the massive amount of observational data, made it difficult to portray a typical class for some of the participants. Therefore, the descriptions in this category describe a representative sample of daily instructional activities utilized during reading/language arts instruction for each of the four participants.

In addition to the “typical day” description of each participant’s classroom, this section includes a synthesized outline of all major activities and/or teacher responses included in the observation field notes. Additional data sources (such as lesson plans, notes from teachers, samples of students’ work, and photographs of students engaged in various instructional activities) are used to provide clarity to descriptive data, as well as insights into activities gleaned important by the participants.

### Theoretical Constructs Relationships

Reading theories and their relationship to reading instruction have recently attracted attention among researchers. The word “theory” often causes some teachers to dismiss information as impractical, and many feel that theory has nothing to do with them or their classroom instruction. However, Harste and Burke (1977) state that

teacher instruction is theoretically based, although the theory or theories from which teachers make instructional decisions are often implicitly held. Therefore, the relationship between what teachers believe and what they actually do in the classroom warrants empirical investigation.

As each case study developed, I focused on each teacher's talk concerning what they believed about reading (process and instruction), observed what practices they felt were important enough to implement in their instruction, cross-referenced the data obtained from the surveys and interviews to the activities implemented in daily classroom instruction, and culled consistencies and inconsistencies between these reflected beliefs and practices.

This category examines each participants' theoretical orientations, top-down/literature-based or bottom-up/skills-based, in connection to the behaviors observed during classroom instruction. The review of this data will not only include an examination of the relationship between the overall theoretical orientation and implemented pedagogical practices, but will also include a look at individual item beliefs and associated practices. This type of review allows a more internal connection to be made, as it is probable that some of the participant's will have controversial areas within their belief system, yet consistency with individual item beliefs and practices. This connection is reported by means of a chart comparing observed practices to stated beliefs as well as a narrative description. This descriptive comparison illustrates the link or detachment between theory and practice for each participant in the study.

### Summary/Reflection

This category provides a summarized view of each participant in light of their professed theoretical orientations to reading--process and instruction. It also provides an opportunity for reflection on any factor that may have altered or affected my synthesis of each case study.

There are many reasons for the consistencies and inconsistencies between what teachers believe and what they practice in the classroom. Some factors dictate what teachers can or cannot do, while others result from empowerment. Many teachers “seize the moment” and many others do not. Just as it is important that teachers reflect on their practices, it is important that I reflect on each teacher’s beliefs and practices as they are illustrated in this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CASE STUDIES OF FOUR TEACHERS**

#### **Introduction**

Theories explain the beliefs and assumptions teachers hold about how readers use aspects of the reading process to become proficient readers. There are two main types of information-processing models on which teachers can base their theoretical beliefs. Each of the information-processing models assumes that a cognitive task can be understood by analyzing it into stages that proceed in a fixed order, beginning with sensory input and ending with some sort of output or response. These categories of reading theories represent two different ideas used by teachers to explain or lead to an understanding of the reading process.

Most reading models focus on the skilled reader, as it is easier to speculate how a complex mental process like reading operates than it is to specify how that ability is acquired (Venesky & Calfee, 1970). Two approaches to the teaching of reading have been dominant in the 20th century. Each of these approaches is supported by one of the aforementioned information-processing belief systems, and thus results in dramatically different practices related to the teaching of reading.

The four teachers involved in the case study section, Phase 3, of this investigation were identified as holding specific theoretical orientations of reading--process and instruction. This identification was operationalized by analysis of individual



responses on survey and interview items. DeFord (1985) suggests that teachers of the same theoretical orientation have similar behaviors and expectations. For that reason, this chapter will present the case studies of the four participants by their conceptual framework of reading: top-down/literature-based and bottom-up/skills-based, respectively.

### **Top-Down/Literature-Based Case Studies**

Top-down theory of the reading process advocates information processing that begins with the whole and proceeds to the parts. In respect to reading, this means that higher levels of processing influence lower levels, with the reader, not the text, being at the center. The reader brings personal meaning to the text based on his/her background experiences. Word, sentence, and text meaning are influenced by the whole set of experiences and knowledge the reader brings to reading, rather than the text providing the mind with meaning. In other words, this information process implies that the reader, rather than the print on the page, drives the reading process and that reading is a meaning-construction process, not merely a process for attending to individual stimuli in the text.

Each interaction between teacher and student is a reflection of the theory that is held about what should be occurring in the classroom. One of the recent major trends in literacy acquisition is literature-based instruction (Cullinan, 1989; Honig, 1988). This instructional approach is based on a top-down model of reading that involves students in meaningful activities in which they read, write, listen, and speak. To support reading, students are introduced to entire selections of text, rather than sub-skills, and they are helped to understand story meaning, rather than being expected to master all the

individual words. The classrooms are child-centered, print-rich environments that welcome the child as an active participant in the learning process. Teachers may emphasize the importance of students assisting in the choice of reading material in which sentences, paragraphs, and entire text selections are the units of language instructionally addressed. Since reading each word is not considered a prerequisite to comprehension, vocabulary is not introduced prior to reading, nor are oral reading errors immediately corrected. Instructional time is more appropriately spent reading and learning strategies, cuing systems, to use when needed.

Curriculum design of the classroom may indeed be brought into focus by one's belief system. A top-down theoretical orientation to reading seems to embody a literature-based instructional program. The two case studies that follow describe teachers who represent a top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading.

### **Case Study #1--Susie Jones**

#### **General Characteristics**

##### **The School**

Moss Elementary is a prekindergarten through grade 5 school that serves approximately 410 students with a staff of 25 certified educators and 9 teacher assistants. The school is a Title 1 school due to the 62% student population participating in the free and reduced lunch program. Parental involvement, however, is extremely strong, as evidenced by the number of parents who volunteer their time to assist teachers, work with children, plan events, or drop by to enjoy lunch with a child or teacher. The principal of 2 years described the school and the faculty as follows:

Moss Elementary strives to provide a safe, healthful, and comfortable environment which is conducive to student achievement and behavior. All of the teachers are eager to participate in professional growth activities aimed at improving their performance as professionals. They are willing to try new approaches/strategies to reach their students. The faculty and staff work hard to direct classroom instruction, resources, and activities so that each student experiences success and is pushed to his/her highest potential.

The school administration supported the use of the district-adopted basal and encourages implementation of grade-level instructional planning. However, the teachers were allowed to supplement the program as they saw fit and to veer from grade-level decisions should they feel it was in the best interest of their students. Ms. Jones shared that she and the other two first-grade teachers met regularly to discuss and plan activities, and they tried to stay together on content issues as much as possible. However, she also made it clear that they each had the freedom to make changes and modifications as needed; after all, “we all have our own style and therefore do our own thing.”

### The Students

The class population consisted of 21 students--10 boys and 11 girls. The racial makeup of the class was 62% European-American and 38% African-American. According to a districtwide placement test given at the beginning of the school year coupled with Ms. Jones' judgement, 11 of the students were reading on grade level, 7 above level, and 3 below level. Two of the students were repeating the first grade but were reading above grade level. Two of the three students performing below level were participating in Reading Recovery.

### The Teacher

Ms. Jones was recognized by her peers as a competent elementary grade teacher. She had a masters of science degree in elementary education and routinely participated in inservice training opportunities offered by the district and region. When asked to share why she felt a need to continuously enroll in staff development opportunities, she replied, "I want to improve my teaching so I can do whatever it takes to find new ways to help my students, all of them, succeed."

Ms. Jones had 11 years of teaching experience: 2 as a Title 1 reading resource teacher, 6 in a grade 2 self-contained classroom, and the past 3 as a first grade teacher. She stated that each of her teaching positions had offered its own unique and rewarding experience but that her favorite was first grade because "one is able to see the overwhelming progression a child makes as a reader and learner while in the first grade." Additionally, Ms. Jones commented that she entered the teaching profession because she wanted a job that would be best suited for a mother of two children, yet soon discovered it was a most exciting, rewarding, and never-boring profession.

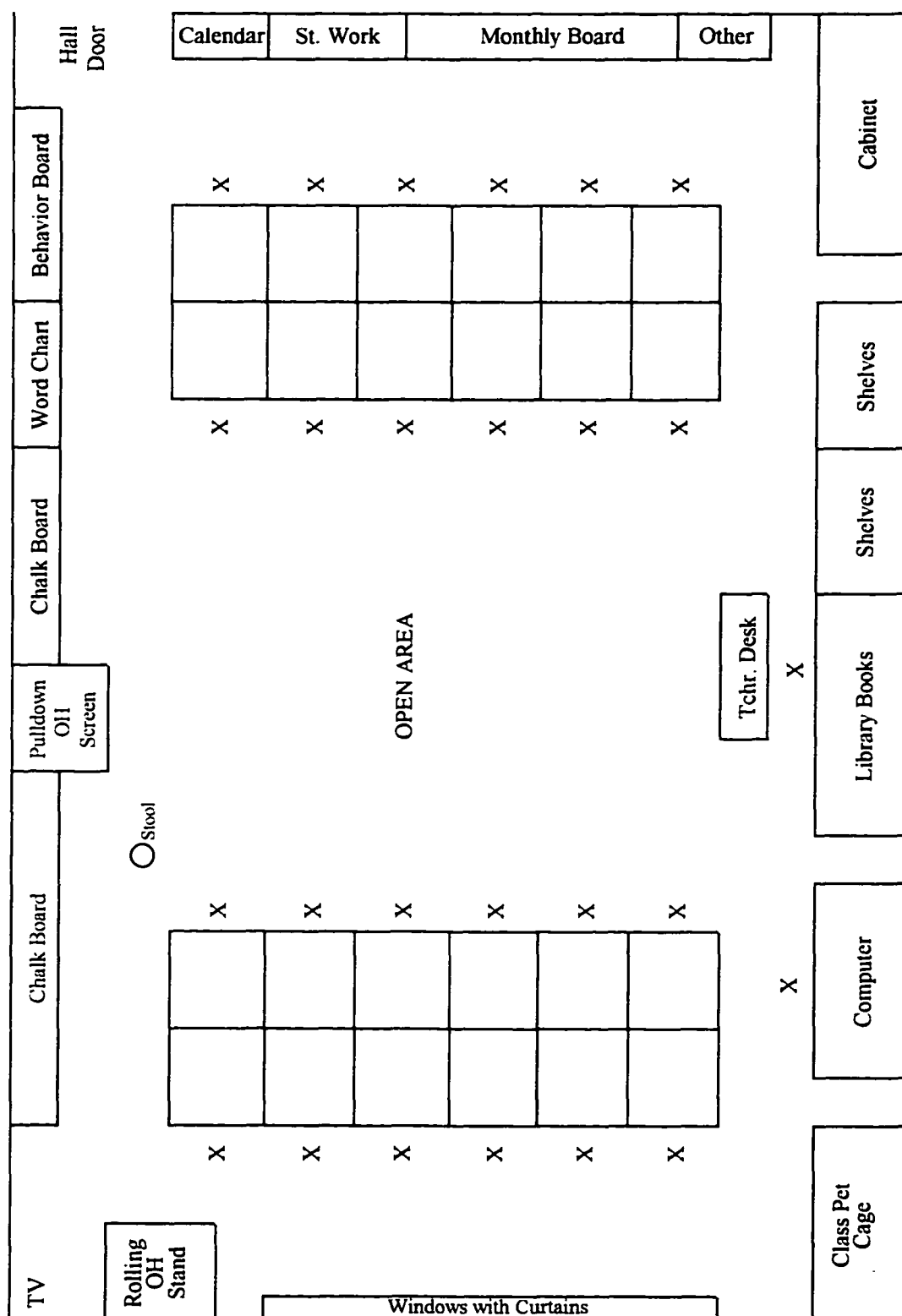
### The Classroom

Ms. Jones' first-grade classroom at Moss Elementary was a brightly decorated room. The bottom one third of the wall was painted a bright blue, and the top section was white with primary colors splattered throughout. The two sections were separated by a wide border in which the children had painted their hand prints, labeled with their names, on the first day of school. Additional student work, both art and academic, was displayed on bulletin boards, the door, cabinets, and walls.

The size of the classroom was smaller than a typical primary-grade room which limited the availability of permanent centers and required strong organizational skills on the part of the teacher. The students had flattop desks that were arranged face-to-face and side-by-side to establish a table-like setting that allowed the children to move easily and talk to each other. An open area was available for large group activities as well as small group and independent manipulative activities. Shelves were located across the back of the room for storing supplies, materials, and library books. The front chalkboard provided a place to house alphabet letters, number cards, word charts, and a pull-down overhead screen. The side boards were used to display the morning activity board, student work, the monthly bulletin board, and other current projects (at this time, the progress reports of the students participating in the “Book It” reading-incentive contest). A classroom floor plan (see Figure 5.1) illustrates this design.

The classroom was a constant source of activity. Each student had a designated place to sit, yet movement around the room was allowed and encouraged in order for the students to negotiate certain learning tasks. The other member of the class, a gorgeous and active chinchilla, resided in a large cage in the back of the room, yet was often free to wander around the room, while the children interacted with one another.

Students in Ms. Jones’ room began arriving at school as early as 7:30 but classroom activities began at 8:00. Table 5.1 illustrates the basic daily schedule utilized in Ms. Jones’ classroom. The times are denoted in the manner presented to me by the teacher, as it seems to reflect her view of the way her day is spent with little thought to the incidental parts of the school day.



**Figure 5.1.**  
Classroom floor plan (Susie Jones).

TABLE 5.1  
Daily Schedule (Susie Jones)

Time	Activity
8:00 - 9:40	Reading/Language Arts
10:00 - 11:00	
11:30 - 11:45	
2:30 - 2:45	
11:45 - 12:30	Math
1:00 - 1:15	
1:15 - 2:00	Science/Social Studies

On a first impression, Ms. Jones' room did not seem to reflect the general arrangement of most holistic classrooms. For example, interest areas were not clearly visible, learning materials were not openly arranged to invite children to freely enjoy them, and there was no obvious sign of a reading corner. However, it was soon obvious that this was due to the physical size of the facilities and not the teacher's choice of design.

#### Theoretical Orientations

Responses to the Reading Beliefs Interview and the Theoretical Orientations of Reading Profile reflected Ms. Jones' theoretical beliefs about how reading develops and instructional beliefs about how reading takes place as strong top-down/literature-based. The following two subsections provide a distinction between the model of the learning-to-read process and model of reading instruction held by Ms. Jones.

### Orientations of the Reading Process

On the Reading Beliefs Interview administered on August 19, 1997, Ms. Jones responded to 9 of the 10 prompts, according to criteria indicative of a top-down orientation of reading (see Appendix H). Seven of the responses showed a strong correlation to the suggested responses, and two originally resulted in a score of NI (not enough information), until further probing for clarification resulted in top-down responses. This score, based on the rating criteria presented in Chapter 4, identified Ms. Jones as holding a strong top-down conceptual framework of reading.

Ms. Jones stressed, in more than one response, the importance of getting her students to enjoy reading and to read for meaning. Although most of her responses were rated as top-down, she emphasized on several occasions the importance of working on vocabulary. She stated,

I feel that vocabulary is extremely important in learning to read. Most of the time vocabulary comes from context or other ways that the children have learned to figure it out on their own. However, at the beginning of the first grade, I do feel the need to build vocabulary prior to reading. I try not to do it in isolation, but I do feel it is important, especially if they are reading a selection independently.

This comment indicates a bottom-up position regarding less-able readers, whereas it strengthens Ms. Jones' stance as an advocate of a top-down orientation regarding more-able readers. However, after probing for more information, Ms. Jones clarified her belief by saying,

No, I do not feel that vocabulary should be introduced prior to the enjoyment of reading, especially if done in an unnatural and contrived manner. I guess I am occasionally protective of my students' feelings early in the year and try to inundate them with vocabulary experiences in order to lessen their frustrations as early readers.



The one response that Ms. Jones reacted to in a manner reflective of a bottom-up position was in response to the question, “What do you do when a student makes an oral reading error and why?”

I guess it depends on the student and the situation. However, in most cases I usually correct them immediately. I do not want to completely stop the flow of the reading, so I just say the correct word, the child repeats it and continues reading. I do this because I feel that it is important that children read what they see.

The remainder of Ms. Jones’ responses were rated top-down, though with varying degrees of commitment or justification. She stressed the importance of reading for meaning in most of her responses and perceived comprehension as a major goal of the reading program. A complete review of Ms. Jones’ responses to all of the interview questions is provided on the following rating chart (see Table 5.2). This “snapshot” view provides an overall look at Ms. Jones’ theoretical orientation to the reading process.

### Orientations of Reading Instruction

Ms. Jones completed the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile in May 1997 and returned it to me personally, in order to add this statement: “I know that each of these questions were supposed to elicit simple responses, but I had several problems answering some of them, especially numbers 10 and 25.”

Ms. Jones’ survey was rated an overall score of 117, based on the instrument’s specified scoring criteria (see Appendix I). Once scoring was completed, Ms. Jones and I discussed the items she had previously questioned:

TABLE 5.2  
Interview Responses (Susie Jones)

Item	Interview Probe	Responses	Score
2a	Oral reading error	Correct--tell them the word, they repeat and continue reading.	BU
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Skip it--look at the word and use clues to find word that makes sense and looks right.	TD
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	A lot of reading, role-playing, discussing and working with partners.	TD
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	Motivation--reading--discussion--vocabulary--skills.	TD
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Not at all for more able readers, and when done for younger readers, only in a natural way in context.	TD
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Use strategies--context, skip the word and think of one that makes sense.	TD
7	Information from testing	Comprehension--discussion that requires the use of thinking skills.	TD
8	Instructional goals	To enjoy reading--to get them to think--to improve comprehension.	TD
9	Rationale for best reader	Reader A because a channel could also be a waterway like a canal.	TD

Item 10: It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.

Ms. Jones clarified that she felt this was important for the beginning of first grade because young children needed to make the connection from what they see to what they say but that more able readers needed correction only if meaning was altered.

Item 25: It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.

Ms. Jones explained that she was not real sure if this meant that skills should be taught in a specific hierarchal fashion or if it meant that skills should not be taught in isolation, so she picked 3 as a middle-of-the-road response. After we clarified the meaning of the item, she asked if she could change her answer to a 5 (strongly disagree).

The point value of item 25 was corrected, and Ms. Jones' overall score of 119 fell within the 103-140 range, resulting in a holistic literature-based orientation to reading instruction. Items not indicative of a literature-based instructional belief were all rated in a manner that provided an overall score that supported Ms. Jones' identified orientation to reading. However, one such item response was accompanied by a comment which made me cognizant that she was aware of the assumption I might make as a result of her strong response:

Item 22: Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words.

Ms. Jones marked her response as a 5, strongly disagree. However, the comment written in the margin read, "Phonics analysis is in no means the most important; however, even though I emphasize other strategies with my children, phonetic decoding is also taught and is often very effective."

Further analysis of items that more specifically represent this theoretical construct provide a deeper understanding of the strength of Ms. Jones' conceptual framework of reading instruction (see Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3  
TORP Items Reflecting Literature-Based Instruction (Susie Jones)

Item	Statement	Score*
5	Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.	5
7	It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.	4
15	When coming to a word that is unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess the meaning and go on.	5
17	It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.	4
18	Flashcard drill with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.	5
23	Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.	5
26	If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.	5
27	It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.	3

\*Scores are based on a range of 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

### Classroom Practices

#### A Typical Day

At 7:55, the children began entering the classroom as they were dismissed from the cafeteria. Coats and book bags were hung up, pencils sharpened, and other "getting settled" routines were attended. During this time, Ms. Jones took attendance and prepared for the day.

Around 8:05, Ms. Jones officially started the day with, “Good Morning, I’m so glad to see each of you today.” The children responded likewise and turned their attention to the calendar board. The class identified the month, day, and year, as well as the weather for the day. Ms. Jones asked various questions regarding time and events. How many days in this month? How many days have we been in school since our last holiday? Does this month have more, less, or the same number of days as last month? When this activity concluded, the children moved to the floor area to begin the Reading/Language Arts block.

A shared reading experience using a big book about six little ducks initiated the reading period. Ms. Jones read the story without interruption, then the children joined in for the second reading. A brief review followed, and Ms. Jones realized that the children were having trouble comprehending the pattern in which the ducks were disappearing one by one. A role-playing activity was quickly organized as Ms. Jones said, “Okay, I think we need to be ducks so we can really see what happened to our duck friends.” Students quickly volunteered to act out the story, while Ms. Jones and the rest of the class reread the story orally. An excellent class discussion followed as the students responded to such questions as: What would you do if they didn’t come back? How would you act when you finally found the ducks? Jason, how would your grandmother feel if you went away to school one morning and didn’t come home afterwards?

A writing activity followed the shared reading experience. Ms. Jones explained that they were going to write a story similar to the one they just read about the six little ducks. She drew a graph (see Figure 5.2) on the board, and with suggestions from the

<u>Animal</u>	→	<u>How it moves</u>	→	<u>Where it goes</u>	→	<u>What it says</u>
Frog	→	Jumps	→	Pond	→	Ribbit
Lion	→	Quietly	→	Jungle	→	Roar
Elephant	→	Slowly	→	Jungle	→	Rrrr
Monkey	→	Swings	→	Trees	→	Uhuhuh
Cheetah	→	Quickly	→	Jungle/plains	→	Growl

Figure 5.2.  
Animal graph (Susie Jones).

class, five animals were selected. The class completed the graph by identifying the following categories: how it moves, where it goes, and what it says.

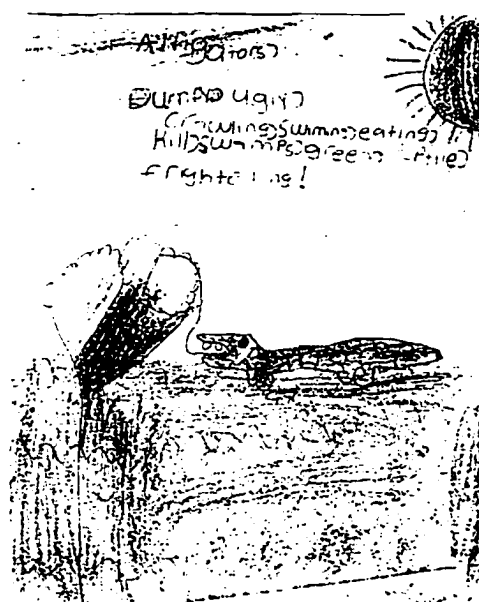
The discussion that took place during the completion of the graph elicited many opportunities for all children to participate, to extend prior experiences, and to build vocabulary. For example, while talking about jungles, the children connected the discussion to the popular Disney movie *The Lion King*. Movie characters like Mufasa, Simba, and Uncle Scar were discussed, and many interesting words were shared: prey, plains, predator, etc. Word meanings were derived from the examples given by the students.

Students moved into self-selected groups and began writing their stories.

Some of the children remained in their desks, and others found a comfortable spot on the floor. I observed one child looking up a word in her reading book, a few asked Ms. Jones for help with spelling (she encouraged them to think of ways to handle the situation), and others used inventive spelling. Ms. Jones monitored the activity,

provided assistance when needed but mostly interacted with the children regarding the task. One child had not completed his writing activity from a previous day and proceeded to work diligently on that activity. Ms. Jones noticed that he was not working with his group and went over to talk to him; however, she decided his enthusiasm was too great and allowed him to continue on his own (see Figure 5.3). I observed much collaboration during this activity as all of the children seemed to participate and do their part. The stories were shared orally, if the authors wished to, prior to being turned in for display and dismissal for recess.

After morning recess (10:00), it was time for basal instruction. Students got their books ready, and Ms. Jones began by having the children locate the title of the story in the table of contents. The story title was located and the author and illustrator acknowledged. Ms. Jones lead the children in a brief prediction exercise, and then everyone turned to the story. Ms. Jones initiated the reading, modeling fluency and expression but soon



**Figure 5.3.**  
Special writing activity (Susie Jones).

opened it to oral reading, silent reading, and choral reading. I observed that no child was called on to read orally unless he/she expressed a desire to do so. Ms. Jones observed, listened to, and worked with the students during this activity. When the

reading was completed, Ms. Jones directed a brief discussion regarding story meaning and responses to earlier predictions.

Next in the daily schedule was skill instruction. Ms. Jones varied these activities depending on the skill(s) to be covered, but the lesson always involved word recognition/analysis. Using typing paper, the students divided the paper into equal rectangles, cut them out, and made word cards. Ms. Jones selected words from the story, and the students wrote the words on their cards. The teacher selected students to bring their word to the board for discussion. The class first recalled how the word was used in the story, questions were asked to verify meaning, the word was used in a new sentence but one that would connect to the story, and details were discussed (phonemes/graphemes, word endings, types of words, part of speech, etc.). In today's lesson, the sound "ay" was reviewed, and the students tried to locate words or items in the room that contained the sound. Ms. Jones distributed a worksheet designed to provide practice working with the "ay" sound, and she provided instructions on its completion. The children completed the worksheet individually and/or with a friend and placed it on Ms. Jones' desk.

The final reading activity for the morning was obviously a favorite among the children, since they began putting their things away in anticipation as soon as they completed the practice page. The morning reading lesson concluded with free reading (see Figure 5.4).

The children were able to participate in



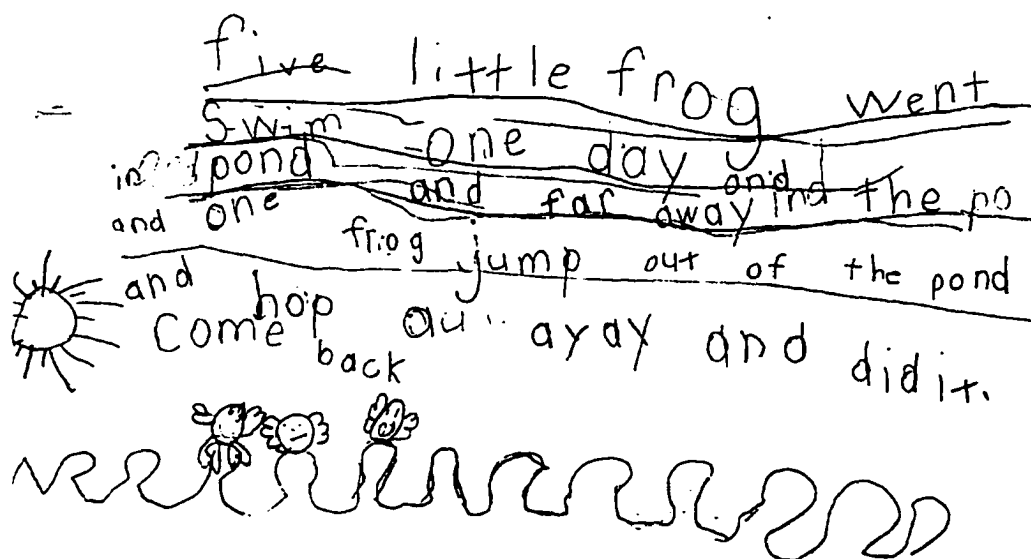
Figure 5.4.  
Free reading (Susie Jones).



independent reading, buddy reading, or shared reading. The children selected the place they wanted to read--at their desks, on the floor, in a corner, or under a table. The children self-selected their partner, if any, and provided assistance to each other as needed.

After lunch, the children returned to the classroom and participated in a fun and relaxed few minutes of oral discussion regarding the morning reading activities. One child really wanted to share his group's story about the little frogs from the morning writing activity, so the group shared how and why they wrote what they did (see Figure 5.5). The class concluded the review session by orally composing a story using the new vocabulary and reviewing the "ay" sound.

The remainder of the day, until 2:30, was spent working in other content areas or participating in enrichment classes and recess. At 2:30 when the children returned from afternoon recess, Ms. Jones was waiting for one final reading activity. The children gathered on the floor to enjoy hearing Ms. Jones read aloud. *The Giving Tree*



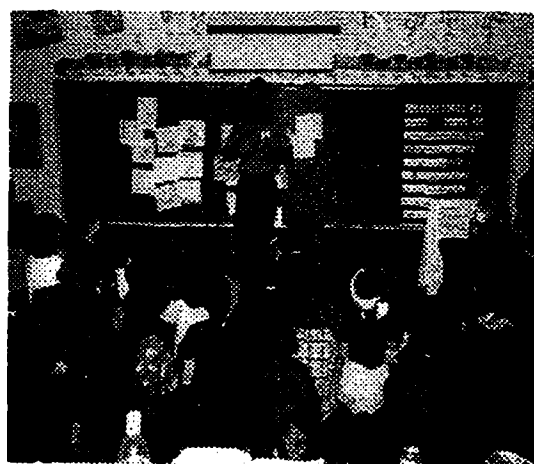
**Figure 5.5.**  
Writing activity (Susie Jones).

(Silverstein, 1964) was briefly introduced to the children by predicting what things a tree could give us (Ms. Jones reminded them of their dessert today--apples), the author and illustrator were mentioned, and then Ms. Jones provided 10 minutes of relaxed and enjoyable reading time for all prior to dismissal.

### Additional Observational Data

The “typical day” illustration presented in the previous section provided a basic overview of the practices implemented in Ms. Jones’ first grade classroom: morning activities, motivational activity, shared reading experience, writing activity, basal instruction, vocabulary study, skill instruction, independent reading, and read aloud experiences. The order, emphasis, and duration of the practices varied among visits but were prevalent in each observation. These “routine” practices were occasionally joined by additional activities that strengthened the classroom literacy experiences. For example, a visit from a local paramedic expanded the students’ experiences with water safety rules, strengthening their appreciation of the story character (see Figure 5.6).

A brief overview of three subsequent Reading/Language Arts observations follow in Table 5.4. A narrative description provides clarity or explanation for certain activities. Vocabulary study was a major part of each of Ms. Jones’ lessons. These activities, however, were built around oral discussions and group games which emphasized the meanings and uses of the words. Words



**Figure 5.6.**  
Enrichment activity (Susie Jones).

TABLE 5.4

Additional Observation Data (Susie Jones)

Activity	Observation A	Observation B	Observation C
Motivation	Read poem about birds. Sang bird song.	Brought baby chick to class.	Teacher shared personal dreams.
Vocabulary study	Spelling words in story context. Inflections added to spelling words.	Game matching words to sentences. Identify long "a" words and use in story context.	Oral work with story words and words related to helping a friend in need.
Shared reading	Big book of basal story.	Big book <i>The Little Red Hen</i> .	Read poem "Good Dreams."
Read aloud	Student selected book .	Read "Be Patient Little Chick."	Basal story with read-along tape.
Skills instruction	Follow directions. Identify rule 2 vowels (- / ).	Sequential order. Antonyms. Test on skills.	Classification--by graphing. Worksheet long "a."
Buddy reading	Third reading of basal story.	Self-selected books.	Not observed.
Independent reading	Free reading for 10 minutes.	Free reading for 10 minutes.	When finished with task--read.
Writing activity	Free journal writing.	Animal cinquain.	Shared writing. "Good Dreams." Students wrote stories about "Dreams."
Basal reading	Big book used in shared reading.	Silent reading.	Read aloud with cassette.
Enrichment	DARE assembly, connected message to story--obey rules.	Art activity making chickens. Math (+ / - chicks).	Visit from paramedic.

were always introduced in context; and even when the vocabulary included words from other subject areas, spelling for example, the students played games connecting these words to the context of their reading selection. Ms. Jones placed a lot of emphasis on “talk in the classroom” as a means of strengthening vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Skills lessons were normally integrated into story discussions and /or vocabulary study or an extension of another activity. For example, observation C refers to a skill lesson on classification. This was done via a graphing activity in which the children shared their stories about dreams with the class and then charted them as dreams that were good, bad, or crazy. The chalkboard scene in Figure 5.6 illustrates this activity. Most skill practice activities were conducted whole group with the teacher working at the overhead or the children working in cooperative groups.

### Theoretical Constructs Relationships

Susie Jones was identified as a teacher holding a strong top-down/literature-based construct of reading. Ninety percent or more of her interview responses were internally consistent and conceptually related to a top-down theoretical orientation of reading and her survey responses represented an instructional emphasis of higher order linguistic units. Certain instructional implications accompany theoretical beliefs. These implications, coupled with belief assumptions, are used as a point of reference to illustrate the consistencies and inconsistencies of Ms. Jones’ beliefs and pedagogical practices (see Table 5.5). The practices listed in the table are not inclusive but serve as a representative sample of observed instructional practices.

TABLE 5.5

Beliefs and Practices: Consistencies and Inconsistencies (Susie Jones)

Theoretical Beliefs	Consistent Practices	Inconsistent Practices
Reading for meaning is important.	Authentic text used and read in entirety. Each reading followed by group discussion, role playing, sharing. Directed reading activities preceded by prediction exercises.	Not observed.
Comprehension does not require recognition of every word.	Teacher ignored reading error "big" for "huge."	Basal words discussed daily.
Students use meaning and grammatical cues in addition to graphic cues in producing and processing text.	"Skip it, read the sentence, and come back." "Does it look right?" "Talk to a friend, think about it, and you'll be able to spell it."	Teacher corrected oral reading (1 of 4 visits) "the happy (hungry) boy was playing."
One learns to read through meaningful activities that involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reader brings meaning.	Numerous reading activities usually connected by theme. Routine group discussions. Shared reading, independent reading, read alouds, and writing included daily.	Not observed.
Instructional emphasis on higher level language units.	Skills in connection to text and in hands-on activities. Vocabulary words and selected story used to teach "ay" and "a." Vocabulary discussed through sentences and short stories.	Not observed.
Evaluation is on the kind of knowledge constructed through reading.	Role playing to measure understanding of story line. Open discussions. Informal assessment by listening to students read.	Not observed.

### Consistencies

The instructional practices Ms. Jones implemented in her classroom strongly exemplified her stated beliefs. Every observation provided evidence of the importance she placed on involving students in the reading process and assisting them in bringing meaning to the situation. The classroom was always a constant hum of activity, as students were engaged in reading, writing, or talking about a text, topic, or skill. This classroom structure provided freedom for the students to interact with the teacher, each other, and the text, as they sought meaning by active involvement in literacy activities.

Ms. Jones' continuous, yet unobtrusive, probing illustrates the emphasis placed on reading for meaning. She constantly engaged the children in open-ended conversations designed to probe deeper into the comprehension of a text or to get the child to use all cues and strategies in attacking a new word. Questions that required the students to think and act on their own behalf were common in the conversation. What would you do to solve this problem? How could this help you? What can I do to help you?

Vocabulary was emphasized in Ms. Jones' class; however, in most situations it was presented in a holistic manner through reading and writing activities or open discussion where the word is presented in some contextual form. Vocabulary study on a daily basis included words presented in the basal, words Ms. Jones deems important, words that relate to the topic(s) being covered, and/or words from other content areas.

Evaluation practices and skill instruction were also consistent with Ms. Jones' beliefs. Skills instruction emphasized teaching through higher order linguistic units in

which letter-sound associations, decoding skills, word recognition, and other skills (such as classification and sequential order) were taught through selected reading materials. Teacher direction was more prevalent during this class time, but student interaction was still very active. Typically, evaluation was observed by watching the children, listening to them read, and joining in their conversations.

### Inconsistencies

The one vocabulary area that portrayed some degree of inconsistency with a top-down/literature-based orientation was the basal word study conducted at the beginning of a new story. Ms. Jones used the basal vocabulary chart to discuss the words with the class. The words were introduced in a sentence, not in isolation, but were shared prior to reading. Basal word study was observed on two separate occasions during the study, and on one visit the text was read in a shared reading experience prior to going over the word chart. Therefore, this variance in belief practices did not occur consistently during the observed visits.

### Summary/Reflection

Susie Jones was identified as holding a strong top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading based on her responses to the Theoretical Orientations of Reading Profile and the Reading Belief Interview. Based on my observations, this was a relatively accurate identification. For the most part, Ms. Jones' teaching strategies were characterized by those behaviors associated with this orientation. However, Ms. Jones cannot be identified as a teacher whose total instructional repertoire exemplifies this construct system. There were occasions that Ms. Jones' practices or comments were semi-indicative of other theoretical

orientations. I use the term “semi” because even in the few situations in which her practices veered from the identified theoretical position, the manner in which the practice was performed was still closely related to the identified beliefs.

The extent, however, of Ms. Jones’ connection between her classroom practices and her beliefs about reading acquisition and process are extremely confirmed. The occasional variance previously mentioned was in relation to beliefs regarding introduction of vocabulary prior to reading. This variance in Ms. Jones’ practice was not consistent with the practices that typically are associated with top-down/literature-based beliefs; however, the practice was consistent with her stated belief. Question 5 of the Reading Belief Interview asks if it is important to introduce new vocabulary words before students read a selection. Ms. Jones responded to that question by saying:

For early readers or less able readers, I feel that introducing the words prior to reading is sometimes effective. Many children are easily frustrated before they have learned how to figure out words on their own. When I read a story to them, I do not feel that it is important at all as they will hear the words as I read, and after we read and discuss the selection, they have an understanding of the meaning. I do not do an introduction every time and do not feel it is a high priority or extremely important, but I do feel it is appropriate some of the time.

This statement, even though not consistent with her professed belief, does add congruency to the practice and Susie Jones’ belief about reading acquisition.

## **Case Study # 2--Marilyn Doe**

### General Characteristics

#### The School

The teacher observed in this case study was a co-worker of Susie Jones.

General school characteristics of Moss Elementary were described in the previous case study; therefore, the only descriptions provided in this section relate to noted variances.



The school administration supports the use of the district adopted basal and encourages the implementation of grade-level instructional planning. However, the teachers are allowed to supplement the program as they see fit and to veer from grade-level decisions should they feel it is in the best interest of their class. Ms. Doe and the other third-grade teachers work closely together to plan lessons that allow them to work on the same content material as much as individual student constraints permit. She stated, "This once was a difficult task as one member of our third-grade team was very stringent in her need to cover material in the manner set forth by the basal manual. However, we now have a new third-grade teacher who shares our beliefs about how to teach, and our planning has taken on a much broader scope."

#### The Students

Ms. Doe's third-grade classroom was comprised of 20 students--9 boys and 11 girls. The racial composition was 70% European-American and 30% African-American. A districtwide placement test administered at the beginning of the school year, coupled with Ms. Doe's judgement, identified 11 students reading on grade level, 3 above level, and 6 below level. Three of the students had repeated a grade prior to entrance in the third grade. Five of the students had been identified as students with special needs and were receiving 504 modifications (extended time, preferential seating, and oral instructions).

#### The Teacher

Marilyn Doe had a bachelors degree in elementary education and was working toward a masters degree, at the time of this study. She has served as a school district representative for the development of the new Northeast Louisiana Reading/Language

Arts Curriculum Guide, an assessment team member for the Louisiana New Teacher Assessment Program for new teachers teaching at Moss Elementary, and as Teacher of the Year for Moss Elementary for the 1996-97 school year.

Ms. Doe has participated in almost every staff development event offered by the school district, as well as many that are offered at the regional level. When asked to explain why she was compelled to continuously attend workshops and to represent her school by serving on various committees, she replied, “I want to make a difference in a child’s life, and as I help them grow, I must also grow as a better and more informed teacher.”

Marilyn Doe had 11 years of experience as an elementary grade teacher. She served as a second-, third-, and fifth-grade teacher in two elementary schools within the school district. Ms. Doe stated that she had enjoyed every year and every grade that she had taught but that third grade was definitely her favorite because “they are so eager and anxious to learn and not only do they love you but they also respect you as their teacher.”

### The Classroom

Ms. Doe’s third-grade classroom was an extremely small room that required much teacher creativity to promote group activities and display student work. The students had flattop desks that were arranged face-to-face and side-to-side to establish a table-like setting. This arrangement allowed the children to move and collaborate with each other as much as space allowed. The narrow space between the two rows of desks provided just enough room for an overhead projector, teacher podium, and teacher mobility. Shelves housing materials, supplies, and library and reference books

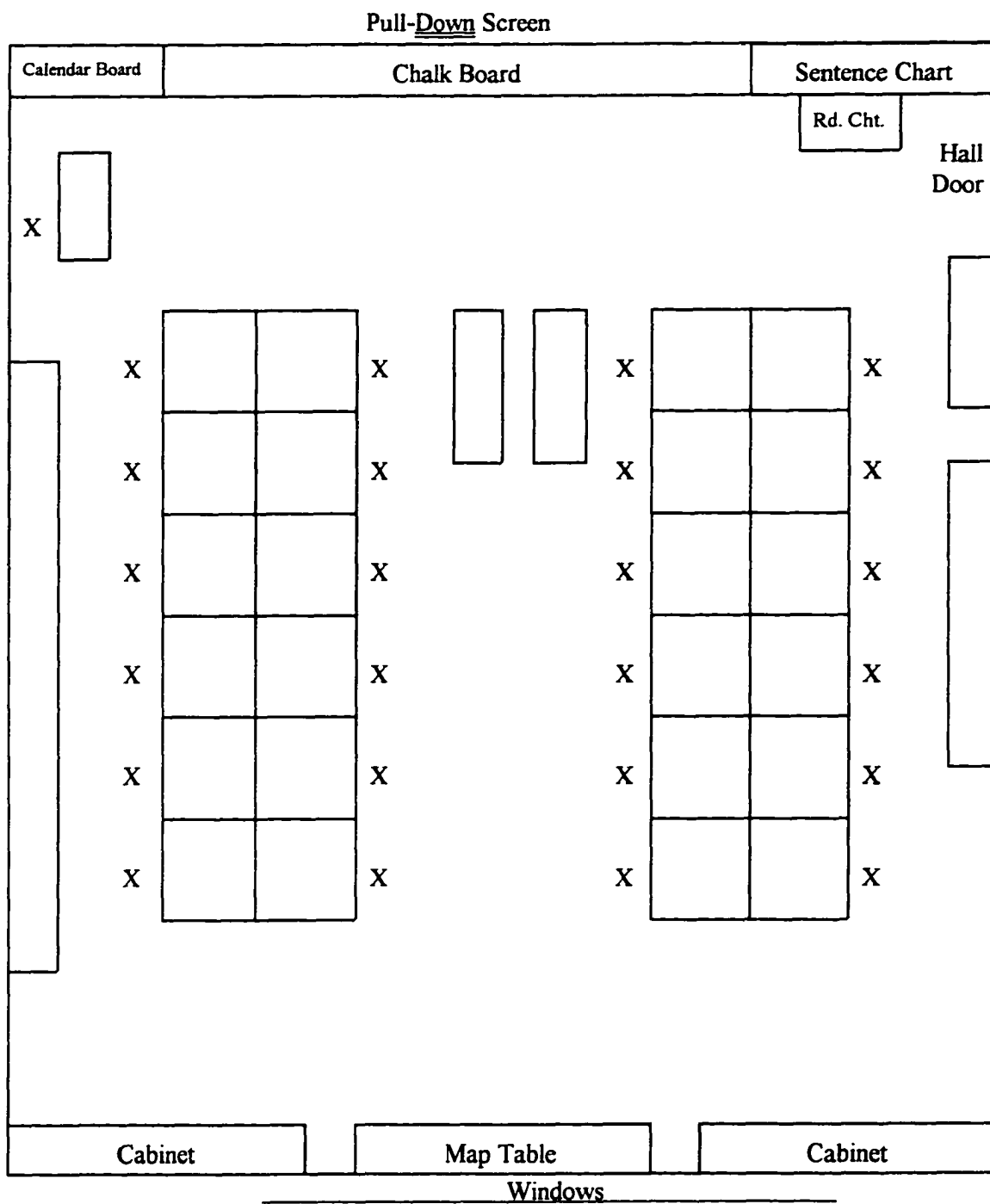
were located across one side of the room. Bulletin boards hung above the shelves and were used to enhance the monthly/seasonal decor, to illustrate progress of current classroom activities, and to display student work. Two large built-in cabinets were located in the rear of the room encasing two small windows. The front chalk board provided a display area for rule/skill posters, word charts, students' work and a pull-down overhead screen. A classroom floor plan (see Figure 5.7) provides a visual depiction of this design.

The size of the room created an initial appearance of clutter and disorganization, especially when the students arrived with all of their personal and school paraphernalia. Ms. Doe's classroom instruction began promptly as the students settled in and proceeded according to her daily schedule (see Table 5.6).

TABLE 5.6

Daily Schedule (Marilyn Doe)

Time	Activity
7:50 - 8:00	Language
8:00 - 9:30	Reading
9:30 - 10:00	Math
10:30 - 11:00	Art/Planning
11:00 - 11:30	Math
11:30 - 12:00	Lunch
12:00 - 12:15	Math
12:15 - 1:00	Language
1:00 - 1:30	P.E./Recess
1:30 - 2:15	Science/Social Studies
2:15 - 2:40	Basic Review
2:40 - 2:50	DARE
2:50	Load Buses



**Figure 5.7.**  
Classroom floor plan (Marilyn Doe).

The general appearance of Marilyn Doe's classroom was not reflective of a typical holistic classroom--literacy centers were not visible, books and other materials were not readily accessible for students' use, and an area for small group instruction was nonexistent. However, students' reading and writing work was displayed in the classroom wherever space allowed, as well as in the halls outside the classroom; and the classroom size did not seem to limit student activity. The students moved purposely around the room, and oral collaboration and cooperative work were prevalent in most activities. In essence, the size of the classroom limited the permanent and physical existence of many of the things indicative of a holistic classroom, but observation soon made it apparent that many of these things did occur within the walls of this small room.

### Theoretical Orientations

By analyzing Ms. Doe's responses on the Reading Belief Interview and the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile concerning her theoretical beliefs about how reading develops and how instruction should occur, I categorized her as a teacher with a moderate top-down/literature-based belief system. A descriptive review of Marilyn Doe's beliefs regarding both models of reading is provided in the following subsections.

### Orientations of the Reading Process

Marilyn Doe's responses to the Reading Belief Interview varied along the continuum of top-down or bottom-up orientations of the reading process. Five of the responses showed a strong correlation to the established criteria for this construct system (see Appendix H), two responses were indicative of a bottom-up belief, and the

remaining statements were based on top-down beliefs but some of stronger convictions than others, yet all identifiable as top-down responses.

Ms. Doe stressed that “reading” encompassed many components that needed to be taught, but a reading teacher’s number one goal should be to instill a love for reading in her students. She said,

I love to read and I cannot imagine others not loving it as much as I do. Therefore, I try to instill a love for reading in my students by making them enjoy it and by making it seem important. I get real thrilled when I feel my kids getting excited about reading.

This statement was in response to an interview question that required Ms. Doe to reflect on the goals she had set for reading instruction in her classroom. This response corroborates other interview responses that stressed the importance of reading for fun and for meaning. She supports the idea that (a) children of all ages should be read to; (b) classroom activities should provide children with a reason to read; (c) reading, writing, listening, and speaking are closely related learning tasks; and (d) children should have numerous opportunities to read materials of all types that may or may not be related to specific school-learning activities.

Though most of Marilyn Doe’s responses denoted top-down beliefs about reading, three of the interview questions resulted in responses that signified a more bottom-up construct. The three questions were asked again in a follow-up interview in order to verify her response. During this interview, the following comment made me aware of the need to reevaluate two of the initial interview responses: “Oh, no, I do feel that way to a point, but I guess I was nervous and didn’t say everything I wanted to . . . please let me explain what I was talking about.” Ms. Doe’s explanations for each

of the three interview items in question are provided in order to verify the final rating of either top-down or bottom-up. Each explanation is given in two parts--comments made in the initial interview, followed by statements from the follow-up interview.

The question “What do you usually do when a student is reading orally and makes an oral reading error and why?” resulted in Ms. Doe momentarily hesitating and then saying, “Unless special conditions exist, I usually pronounce it (the word) for them and then move on. There’s usually too much stress on the kid already to pause and make them figure it out.” The follow-up discussion resulted in this response,

When reading, especially in a large group situation, I usually just quietly tell them the word and reading continues. Now, if the child is one that I know doesn’t get frustrated in front of others, I allow time for them to use context clues and other strategies they know to figure out the word. Also, if the reading is occurring between the two of us, I always encourage the child to search for meaning clues in determining the word.

Another response that I felt needed clarification dealt with the issue of instructional strategies. When Ms. Doe was asked to respond to the two-part question, “What strategies do you use in teaching reading that you feel are the most important for your students, and what activities should students be involved in for the majority of their instructional time?” she stated,

I use a lot of different reading strategies in my teaching, but I feel the most important one is probably using a variety of reading materials to reinforce comprehension. As far as student involvement instructionally, I guess it would be to reinforce the skills by demonstrating to the them how to use them.

Ms. Doe’s response to the first part of the question clarified her top-down belief, but the response that followed was indicative of the opposing model of reading. However, after probing for more information, it was apparent that she had misunderstood the question. When asked to reiterate the question in her own

words and to explain her answer, she said, "If a child and I were working together on instructional skills, how should most of our time be spent? I responded that if you were working one-on-one on skills then demonstrating it for them would be best." I restated the question and she responded, "Children should be involved in reading, talking, and sharing." This clarification, coupled with her response to the first part of the question, resulted in a top-down rating.

Ms. Doe initially responded to the question regarding the importance of introducing vocabulary words prior to students' reading a selection by saying, " Yes, I think some students may need to try and figure out words on their own some of the time, but for the most part I really feel it is best to do it beforehand." When asked later to explain how the vocabulary words were introduced, Ms. Doe stated,

Oh, that depends on the words, the selection, and lots of other things. I do not just introduce the word by telling it to them--we do a lot of experience building and sharing activities where they are exposed to the words before reading. Sometimes this takes a few minutes, and sometimes it is an entire lesson.

This additional response is still somewhat indicative of a bottom-up orientation to reading as it implies that the students cannot derive meaning from the context itself; however, it does indicate an awareness that it is not important that vocabulary be introduced in a rote manner prior to reading.

The one response, in both the initial and follow-up interviews, that Ms. Doe reacted to in a manner reflective of a bottom-up position was in reply to the directive to rank order, from most important to least important, the steps in a Directed Reading Activity (DRA). She stated, "I do the steps in the same order as



presented in the basal we are presently using: (1) introduce vocabulary, (2) motivate/set purposes for reading, (3) read the selection, (4) ask questions after silent reading, and (5) practice skills. Ms. Doe did not waver from this position even though she commented that sometimes motivation was done in conjunction with introduction of vocabulary or that skills were reinforced during any of the other activities. However, she continuously mentioned that this was the way the book presented the material.

The remainder of Ms. Doe's responses provided ample evidence of top-down responses. A complete review of her responses, in condensed form, to all of the interview questions are provided on the following rating chart (see Table 5.7).

#### Orientations of Reading Instruction

Ms. Doe completed the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile with an overall score of 112, based on the instrument's specified scoring criteria (see Appendix I). This score categorized her as a teacher supporting a literature-based orientation to reading instruction. Survey items designed to elicit responses more indicative of the opposing orientation to reading acquisition, skills-based, all strongly supported Ms. Doe's construct.

A closer look at the individual scores for those items designed to more specifically represent the literature-based theoretical construct provide a more thorough understanding of Ms. Doe's conceptual framework of reading instruction

TABLE 5.7

Interview Responses (Marilyn Doe)

Item	Interview Probe	Responses	Score
2a	Oral reading error	Tell them the word and continue reading.	BU*
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Look at the word and use clues to find word that makes sense and looks right--sometimes just tell them.	TD
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	Using a variety of reading materials to reinforce comprehension--reading, talking, and sharing	TD
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	Vocabulary-- motivation--reading-- questions--skills.	BU
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Vocabulary should be introduced prior to reading; however, should be done in meaningful experiences.	BU*
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Use strategies--look at surrounding sentences, skip the word, think of one that makes sense, and sound out.	TD
7	Information from testing	Comprehension--vocabulary in meaningful texts.	TD
8	Instructional goals	To show them the love and importance of reading--make them want to read.	TD
9	Rationale for best reader	Reader A because context clues produced a word that made sense.	TD

\*Detailed responses are found in the text and are borderline responses.

(see Table 5.8). All but two of the items reflecting a literature-based orientation fell in the upper section of the Likert scale. These scores of four and five reflected a strong commitment of agreement with the individual practices identified on the instrument. However, responses to items 5 and 27 indicated a middle-of-the-road level of agreement. After talking to Ms. Doe during the interview phase of the study, I better understood the score of three for item 27--introduction of new words prior to reading (refer to previous Table 5.7 and the narrative description immediately preceding for more information). However, I questioned Marilyn Doe in reference to her response to the question regarding the use of natural language in print materials.

- Item 5:        Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.
- The wording of the item affected my rating as I could see two ways to interpret the question and, therefore, two ways to respond: (1) All materials should be authentic and use natural language--which I strongly agree with, and (2) the level of the material is not important as long as natural language is included--which I disagree with as I feel it is very important that students work in material designed for their level, yet written in the students' natural language whenever feasible.

### Classroom Practices

#### A Typical Day

At 7:50, the children began entering the classroom. Book bags and other materials were put up, and students immediately began working on the daily oral language activity displayed on the overhead screen. This activity consisted of four

TABLE 5.8

TORP Items Reflecting Literature-Based Instruction (Marilyn Doe)

Item	Statement	Score*
5	Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words or for sentences.	3
7	It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.	4
15	When coming to a word that is unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess upon meaning and go on.	4
17	It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.	5
18	Flashcard drill with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.	5
23	Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.	5
26	If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.	4
27	It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.	3

\* Scores are based on a range of 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

sentences that contained various errors for the children to identify and correct. Ms. Doe had soft music playing while the students completed the task and she took attendance and prepared for the day.

Around 8:05, Ms. Doe moved to the front of the room, greeted the students, and began the process of checking their work. A student volunteered to read each sentence as written and then orally shared his/her correction, as Ms. Doe wrote it on the overhead. Each correction elicited a brief class review of the skill involved in the correction.

The reading period officially began with a read-aloud experience. Ms. Doe read a book about a grandfather with a special talent. She shared the cover, title, and illustrator of the story with the class prior to reading. She attempted to read the entire story without interruption but finally gave in to a child who could not contain his need to ask, "Ms. Doe, what is a soft shoe dance?" Ms. Doe thought for a moment, laid down her book, demonstrated the technique to the delight of the class, and then continued reading. A brief class discussion followed the read-aloud at which time Ms. Doe asked the children why they thought she had chosen this particular book, and they responded, "Because we've been studying about grandparents in our reader."

Vocabulary study followed the read-aloud experience. Ms. Doe explained that the students were going to learn some new words and review a skill at the same time. She drew a rectangle on the chalkboard and divided it into three equal sections labeled "word," "clues," and "meaning." She wrote the word "somber" in the first section and

asked the class what the word meant. When no response was given, Ms. Doe had a student locate the word in the story and write the sentence on the board over the word strip. The class read the sentence orally and picked out the clue words “happy but somber.” Discussion of these clues led the children to complete the diagram by discovering that somber meant unhappy.

Ms. Doe then divided the class into groups by counting off five groups of four. Each group received a graph similar to the one used in the large group activity and proceeded to use context clues in the basal reader to determine word meaning (see Figure 5.8). Each student group chose a spokesman to share their responses with the class.

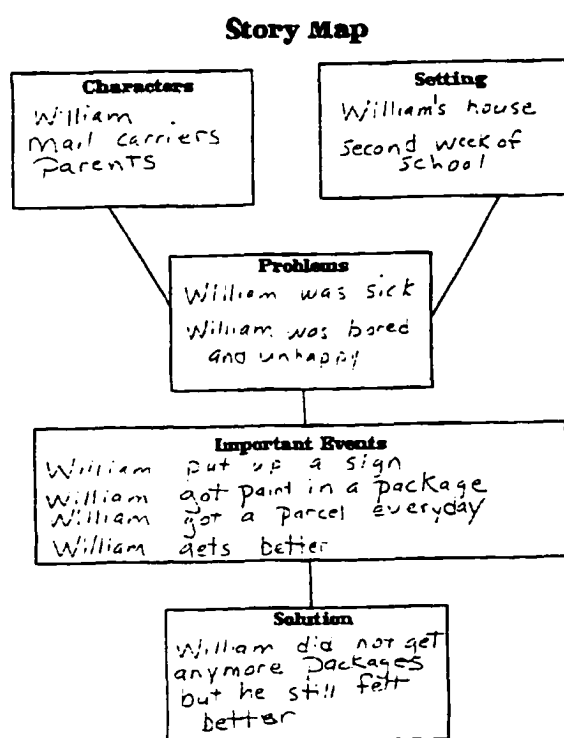
Basal reading, or “real reading” as I overheard one child call it, followed the vocabulary study. Today’s story had been previously introduced so the class prepared for reading for a purpose. Ms. Doe told the students to read the story silently while looking for answers regarding certain story elements--characters, setting, problems, main events, and solutions.



Figure 5.8.  
Vocabulary study (Marilyn Doe).

Ms. Doe initiated the reading by reading the first couple pages aloud and then moved into silent reading. While the students read, Ms. Doe moved around the room talking to and reading with each child individually. Reading concluded with the class chorally reading the last few pages.

Ms. Doe conducted a comprehension review of the story via a story map (see Figure 5.9). Students worked with a self-selected buddy and spent about 5 minutes responding to the story elements identified on the map. Ms. Doe displayed a completed story map on the overhead and the groups checked and corrected their work. I was amazed at the collaboration that occurred in this activity as I did not observe any students changing their responses without first discussing it with each other and/or their neighbor.



**Figure 5.9**  
Story map (Marilyn Doe).

The next activity in the daily reading schedule was skill instruction. This segment of the reading lesson varied as skills were often taught in conjunction with the other activities. Ms. Doe presented a poem she had written on a poster. She read the poem aloud, and then the children joined in the second reading of the shared reading experience. Class discussions brought out the descriptive comparisons used, and Ms. Doe introduced the term “simile.”

She continued the discussion by quoting a few common similes. The class then explained the meaning, made comparisons, or gave examples from the similes.

The final activity for the morning was an extension of the skill instruction activity. The students moved into self-selected groups of four and five and completed the workbook page that provided reinforcement for the skill activity. The children collaboratively completed the workbook page and then selected one simile to illustrate. The students developed a draft picture on the bottom of the workbook page and then transferred it to a final copy on ditto paper (see Figure 5.10). The teacher's lesson plans indicated that these would be collected, bound, and placed in the class library.

The rest of the day, until about 2:15, was spent working in other content areas or participating in enrichment classes. I observed that free reading was utilized throughout the remainder of the day as students concluded various activities. A special time, around 2:15, was designated as reading review time. The students and Ms. Doe briefly discussed issues from the morning reading instruction and then relaxed for a final time of recreational reading.



Figure 5.10.  
Simile (Marilyn Doe).



### Additional Observational Data

The “typical day” depiction presented in the preceding section provided a basic outline of the reading practices implemented in Ms. Doe’s third-grade classroom: daily oral language, read aloud, vocabulary study, basal instruction, shared reading, skill instruction, and writing experiences. The order and intensity of these practices varied among visits, yet were prevalent in each observation. Additional activities, as well as varied forms of these “routine” practices often accompanied the regular reading lesson. Table 5.9, accompanied by an occasional narrative description, illustrates an overview of three additional reading observations.

Vocabulary study was a major part of each lesson I observed. Ms. Doe introduced the vocabulary in a variety of ways that always emphasized word meanings and correct uses of the words. Most of the time the initial introduction of story vocabulary was through group games and oral discussion.

Skill instruction was normally integrated into other activities as much as possible. Ms. Doe assigned work from the workbook that accompanied the basal, but most workbook pages were completed in cooperative group activities or as a whole group with the teacher directing the activity from the overhead.

Ms. Doe stressed that enrichment activities often proved to be the activity the students remembered most. For this reason, she always included some type of extension activity for the reading lesson, even though time often required that it be executed later in the day and sometimes even by an enrichment teacher. Figure 5.11 illustrates an example where the art teacher extended the reading lesson by having the students cooperatively design a poster based on the behavior of the story character.

TABLE 5.9

Additional Observation Data (Marilyn Doe)

Activity	Observation A	Observation B	Observation C
Motivation	Oral sharing about grandparents.	Teacher read poem about a bear.	Discussed plays-- pretended to be animal characters.
Vocabulary study	Teacher presents words and group reaches consensus on possible meanings.	Students made vocabulary "paw prints" for group matching game.	Game in groups-- match missing word with word cards.
Shared reading	Not observed.	Bear poem.	Not observed.
Read aloud	Book about grandparents.	Book about bears.	Selected poems.
Skills instruction	Worksheet--long vowel sound in two-syllable words.	Abc order with vocabulary "paw prints."	Worksheet--using affixes. Context clues.
Buddy reading	Not observed.	Not observed.	Self-selected books.
Independent reading	10 minutes free.	10 minutes free.	10 minutes free.
Writing activity	Grandparents' tales about the "good old days."	Group stories about bears--real or fantasy.	Poems about an animal from the story.
Basal reading	Choral/oral reading	Oral reading of selected pages.	Silent reading.
Enrichment	Language class--wrote letter to grandparents.	Art class--posters about nice things from the story.	Science class--researched animals in poems.

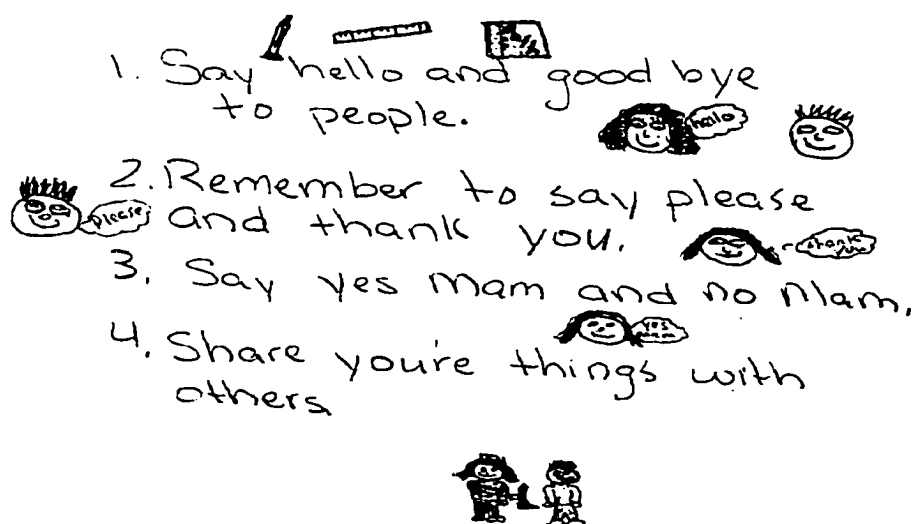


Figure 5.11  
Enrichment activity (Marilyn Doe).

### Theoretical Constructs Relationships

Marilyn Doe was categorized as holding a moderate top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading. This categorization means that she gave responses to interview items that were rated as both top-down and bottom-up, yet generally responded in a manner more consistent with a whole-to-part belief and approach to reading. Criteria for categorization, as listed in Appendices H and I, accompanied with belief statements, are listed as a point of reference to illustrate the consistencies and inconsistencies of Ms. Doe's theoretical beliefs and pedagogical practices (see Table 5.10). The practices listed are not inclusive of observed instructional practices but serve as a representative sample.

### Consistencies

Ms. Doe, throughout the observations, stressed that reading for meaning was important. Numerous and varied reading opportunities were available for students, and

TABLE 5.10

Beliefs and Practices: Consistencies and Inconsistencies (Marilyn Doe)

Theoretical Beliefs	Consistent Practices	Inconsistent Practices
Reading for meaning is important.	Authentic text used and read in entirety. Each reading followed by group discussion, sharing. Directed reading activities preceded by prediction exercises.	Not observed.
Comprehension does not require recognition of every word.	Teacher encourages "guessing" while reading in group activities.	Basal words discussed daily.
Students use meaning and grammatical cues in addition to graphic cues in producing and processing text.	"Skip it, read the sentence, and come back." Look at the words and see if there are any chunks of sounds you know.	Teacher corrected oral reading errors two of three times observed.
Learn to read through meaningful activities that involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reader brings meaning.	Reading activities usually connected by theme. Routine group discussions. Independent reading, read alouds, and writing included daily. Motivation activities that draw on prior background.	Not observed.
Instructional emphasis on higher level language units.	Skills integrated with other activities and done cooperatively. Skills taught through games. Skills taught through vocabulary words and selected text. Vocabulary discussed in context.	Not observed.
Evaluation on the kind of knowledge constructed through reading.	Open discussions. Informal assessment by listening to students read.	Not observed.

their active participation in these activities were paramount. Students were constantly encouraged to bring meaning to the situation as Ms. Doe implemented probing strategies to aid students in drawing on their personal knowledge. She incorporated a great deal of speaking and listening activities, as evidenced by the constant hum of conversation that existed in her risk-free classroom which encouraged students to challenge the text.

Skills instruction was evident in Ms. Doe's classroom, yet she did not place any major emphasis on isolated skill drills. She promoted skill improvement in a variety of strategic ways, including vocabulary and textual games, cooperative skill-building activities, and most of all through reading. Evaluation measures include observation, talking to the students, and listening to them read.

Vocabulary was emphasized in Ms. Doe's classroom. She believed that introducing vocabulary was important, as it included not only word recognition but also word meaning. She professed that students needed to know the meaning of words in order to be able to read the selection. Ms. Doe would like for the students to recognize all of the words by sight but would rather they be able to figure them out than rely on the teacher. Ms. Doe believed that when the children made oral reading errors in which meaning was not distorted, the error should either be ignored or simply corrected so the child can move on. Ms. Doe can then later work with the child on figuring out the word.

### Inconsistencies

At first glance, there appeared to be two areas in which inconsistencies could exist with a top-down/literature-based orientation: introduction of vocabulary words

and correction of oral reading errors. Ms. Doe conducted vocabulary study of basal words at the beginning of each lesson. The words were generally introduced via a meaning oriented activity in which she and the students collaboratively discussed and used the vocabulary in order to derive at meaning. I observed this vocabulary study on each of my observations and only once were the words recalled by simply reviewing them from a sentence chart. However, even then they were used within the context of a sentence and not in isolation.

The other discrepancy also involves vocabulary as it pertains to students oral reading errors. The students read orally on each of my visits, yet I only experienced three occurrences in which oral reading errors were made. On one occasion, the teacher looked at the child and he immediately readdressed the text correcting his error. The other two incidences resulted in Ms. Doe immediately supplying the needed word, after mispronunciation had occurred and reading continued. Even though this variance in belief practices did not occur consistently in each of the observed visits, it demonstrated a warranted inconsistency.

#### Summary/Reflection

Marilyn Doe rated as holding a moderate top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading based on responses to the Theoretical Orientation of Reading Profile, the Reading Belief Interview, and data from my observations. For the most part, Ms. Doe's pedagogical practices were characterized by behaviors associated with this orientation. She stressed the importance of getting her students to enjoy reading, to read for meaning, and to embrace all language systems in the process. There are, however, issues in which Ms. Doe's practices veered from the identified theoretical

orientation: introduction of vocabulary before students read a selection, and corrections when an oral reading error occurs.

Even though situations existed in which Ms. Doe's instructional practices were not completely aligned with her identified theoretical position, the connection between her practices and her espoused beliefs were confirmed. Question 2 of the Reading Belief Interview asks what the teacher does when a student makes an oral reading error. Ms. Doe responded to the question by saying,

I pronounce the word for them and we continue reading. There is too much stress on the kid to pause and wait while he attempts to figure it out. We correct the error and move on, and I make a mental note to work with the child later on using clues to figure out the word.

Ms. Doe's statement may not be congruent with her professed orientation but it is consistent with the practices utilized in the classroom. In addition, this comment implies that she corrected oral reading errors not because of her beliefs about reading acquisition, but rather because of beliefs about frustrating students.

Question 5 asks if it is important to intro new vocabulary words before students read a selection. Ms. Doe's response to that question was,

Yes, some students may need to try sometimes to figure words out for themselves but I really feel it is best to do it beforehand. I do not just throw the word out in isolation but we discuss it through experience building activities.

These statements, even though not consistent with a top-down/literature-based position, do add congruency between Marilyn Doe's beliefs and instructional practices.

### **Bottom-Up/Skills-Based Case Studies**

Bottom-up theory of the reading process advocates information processing that begins with the parts of language and progresses to the whole. In respect to reading,

this means that students must process lower order units before they are able to process higher order structures, with the printed page being the stimulus for reading, not the reader. The reader begins with the letters on the page and constructs more complex levels of language: words, sentences, and paragraphs, in order to glean meaning from the print. In other words, this information process can be viewed much like solving a jig-saw puzzle. The reading puzzle is solved by beginning with each piece of the puzzle (letters) and putting these together to make a picture (meaning).

Teachers consistently use theories in their classrooms to make instructional decisions about ways to help children become proficient readers. The skills-based model of reading is the most commonly accepted approach for providing reading in schools today. Teachers who believe in a bottom-up theory of the reading process tend to make decisions that result in skills-based instructional practices. To support reading, students are taught in a direct and systematic manner involving lessons in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teachers emphasize the importance of teaching phonics with the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent. The sounds are then blended to form words and then once decoding is mastered, meaning can be derived from the print on the page. Teachers stress the preteaching of new vocabulary words before reading a selection, and comprehension is viewed as a set of discrete skills to be addressed when encountering text. Instructional time is usually spent working on the skills involved in the three primary components of this model of reading: decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Theories of reading affect the curriculum design of the classroom. A bottom-up theoretical orientation to reading seems to typify a skills-based instructional program.



The two case studies that follow describe teachers who hold a bottom-up/skills-based conceptual framework of reading.

### **Case Study #3--Minnie Lee**

#### **General Characteristics**

##### **The School**

Rose Elementary is a prekindergarten through grade 5 school that services 812 students with a staff of 62 certified educators and 19 teacher assistants. The student body reflects a racial composition of 72% African-American and 28% European-American, with over 85% participating in the federal free and reduced lunch program. The school is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year as a participant in the Title 1 schoolwide program striving to improve reading achievement of the at-risk population by promoting early intervention programs and a reduced teacher-pupil ratio.

The school administration supports the use of the district-adopted basal and encourages the implementation of grade-level instructional planning. However, the administration at Rose Elementary also stressed the need for teachers to use their entire repertoire of methods and materials to reach the needs of all children. Several years ago, the school principal officially had the school address changed to Rose Elementary, #1 Learning Place, and the school adopted the following mission statement:

- Every staff member at Rose Elementary School is a unique individual who is committed to the task of providing rich learning experiences that meet the educational needs of all students. The whole child will be nurtured in a safe, stimulating, and progressive environment in which responsibility and respect for themselves and others are affirmed.
- Our goal is to teach students to read so that they may read to learn for the rest of their lives.

- In order to accomplish our goal, there is:  
a commitment of all staff members,  
emphasis on essential skills, and  
attention to discipline in a  
#1 Learning Place.

### The Students

Ms. Lee's second-grade class consisted of 20 students--10 boys and 10 girls.

A districtwide placement test administered at the beginning of the school year identified that four students were reading above grade level, nine on level, and seven below level.

Three students had been diagnosed with behavioral problems: two due to academic and/or physical constraints and one due to emotional issues relating to a terminally ill parent. Another student was an autistic child who participated in the district's autistic program for 3 years prior to entering the regular program.

### The Teacher

Minnie Lee was a 36-year-old teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. She had been employed as a second-grade teacher for 7 years and stated that she also enjoyed working at the third- and fourth-grade levels, but second grade was by far her favorite. When asked to share why she had become a teacher, Ms. Lee responded,

I chose teaching from a short list of acceptable career choices for women (teacher, nurse, secretary). After making this choice I realized how much I enjoyed making students aware that they have a future and then helping them prepare for it. This realization also serves as a reminder that I, too, must continuously prepare for my future.

Ms. Lee had a bachelors and a masters degree in elementary education, a masters degree in administration, and additional certification as a student-teacher supervisor and elementary principal. In addition, Ms. Lee recently has begun work on her education doctoral degree.

Research implies that effective principals influence their teachers' educational practices and that leadership behavior affects teacher behavior. Ms. Lee pointed out on several occasions how much influence a previous principal had on her teaching. One comment especially attracted my attention:

The first principal I worked for had a major influence on me, and I've internalized a whole lot of (her) beliefs. Two of these have had a major impact on the way I teach: (1) Do every thing you can to get students to understand the skill you're trying to teach, and (2) Always look for ways to improve. My new principal has continued most of the practices established by [the previous principal]; therefore, my school allows me the freedom to act on these beliefs as needed.

### The Classroom

Ms. Lee's second-grade classroom was a very neat, spacious, and well-organized room. The student desks were arranged in neat rows facing the front of the room. The room had ample storage space and shelving. Shelves lined two of the classroom walls: those located under the bulletin boards housed library books and other supplemental curriculum materials, and those in the back of the room provided storage space for the teacher, as well as a wide counter top to hold displays and papers. Additional cabinets were available to store art and general teacher supplies. A television was located in the front corner of the room for frequent use with supplemental reading activities, as was a rolling cart and overhead projector. Garfield was a favorite character of Ms. Lee so several stuffed animal characters were displayed throughout the room and a Garfield wall clock, fish tank and several posters added to the decor. Ms. Lee's college diplomas were displayed in the rear of the room behind her desk, and this added a touch of professionalism. The following classroom floor plan (see Figure 5.12) depicts this design.

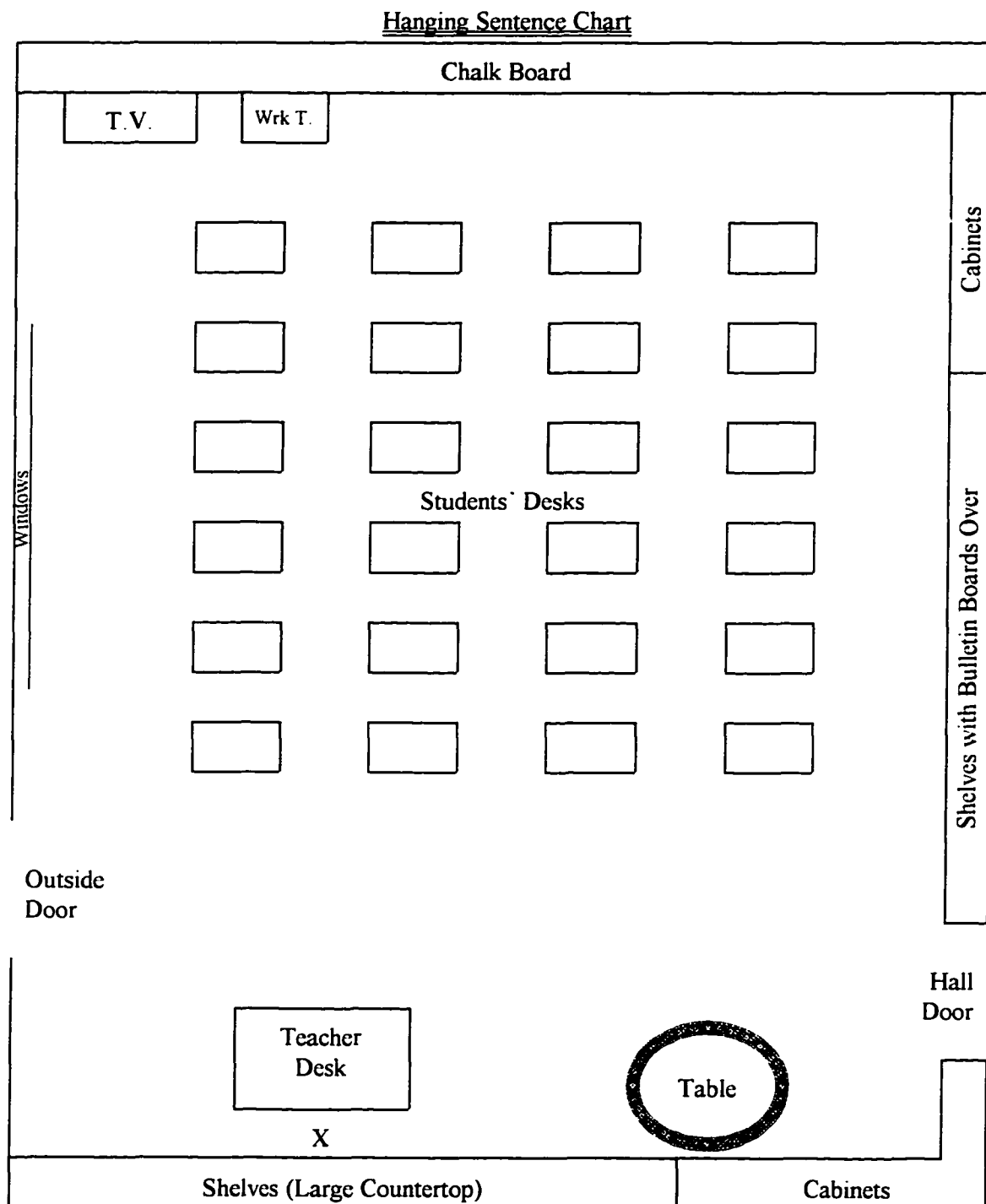


Figure 5.12.  
Classroom floor plan (Minnie Lee).

Students in Ms. Lee's room began arriving at school as early as 7:30 for breakfast but did not report to the classroom until 7:55. The students arrived in an orderly fashion and immediately began working on the morning activity. The classroom schedule was very precisely designed and routines proceeded likewise (see Table 5.11).

TABLE 5.11

Daily Schedule (Minnie Lee)

Time	Activity
7:50 - 7:53	Students Arrive/Prepare/Teacher Roll
7:53 - 8:10	Morning Activity/Pledge
8:10 - 9:45	Reading
(8:10 - 9:45)	(Tuesday--Library)
9:45 - 10:00	Recess
10:00 - 11:00	Math
11:00 - 11:30	English
11:30 - 12:00	P.E.
12:00 - 12:15	Writing
12:15 - 12:45	Lunch
12:45 - 1:00	Read Aloud
1:00 - 1:15	Recess
1:15 - 1:45	Spelling
1:45 - 2:15	Basic Skills Study
2:15 - 2:45	Science/Social Studies
2:45 - 3:00	Load Buses (Buses 1-2-3 Walkers)

The bulletin boards located on the wall above the long row of shelves provided a small seasonal display, a math review, and an area for current news. Posters and other colorful items were limited to a few Garfield items placed sporadically on the walls or shelves. The classroom facilities and class schedule facilitated order and supported an academic teacher-directed program.

### Theoretical Orientations

Ms. Lee's theoretical beliefs about reading development and acquisition, strong bottom-up/skills-based, were reflective of her responses to the Reading Belief Interview and the Theoretical Orientations to Reading Profile. A more descriptive distinction between the model of the learning-to-read process and the model of reading instruction held by Ms. Lee is provided in the following subsections.

#### Orientations of the Reading Process

Minnie Lee's responses to the Reading Belief Interview were consistent, for the most part, with the operational definitions of the bottom-up conceptual framework of reading. Seven of the 10 responses demonstrated an immediate strong correlation to the established criteria (see Appendix H); 2 initial responses were scored as not enough information (NI), but further questioning resulted in a score consistent with the bottom-up construct; and 1 response was indicative of a top-down belief.

The one item that resulted in a top-down response was regarding the identification of the most effective reader. The item presents three oral reading errors which the teacher reviews and judges in order to identify the most effective reader, based on their reading error. Ms. Lee identified Reader A as the most effective reader, as they had substituted channel for canal--new word but similar meaning. This response is characteristic of a top-down, not bottom-up, construct system.

Two interview questions required a follow-up discussion in order to determine the appropriate response category. When Ms. Lee was asked to explain what activity she felt students should be engaged in for the majority of their instructional time, she responded, "Reading and skill development." This response conveys a double interpretation;

therefore, I requested more information. Probing eventually resulted in the same response but with clarification on her usage of reading and skill development. She defined reading in this situation as reading the basal in the manner prescribed in the teacher's manual, and skills development was likewise defined but with additional supplements, such as *Hooked on Phonics* (1992) and *You Can Read* (Thomas & Bardorf, 1993). This explanation provided enough information to change the rating on this item from not enough information (NI) to bottom-up.

"What goal for reading instruction do you think you have made good progress toward accomplishing this year?" was the other question receiving an initial rating of NI. Ms. Lee's response to that question was, "Having the children be able to understand the story by reading with fluency and, of course, knowing vocabulary and being able to successfully attack words." The first part of her response was typical of a top-down construct, but recognizing and attacking words is more consistent with a bottom-up orientation. However, a rating of bottom-up was given, after further discussion, due to the strength of her commitment regarding vocabulary recognition and the realization that reading for understanding really meant, to her, being able to recall story facts rather than obtaining meaning from reader and text interaction.

The rest of Ms. Lee's interview responses were rated bottom-up. The responses carried various degrees of justification, but all were indicative of this model of reading. Ms. Lee stressed the importance of skills development in most of her responses and perceived this as a major responsibility of her reading program. A complete review of her responses to all of the interview questions are provided on the following rating chart (see Table 5.12).

TABLE 5.12

Interview Responses (Minnie Lee)

Item	Interview Probe	Responses	Score*
2a	Oral reading error	Tell them the word and or give them the word.	BU
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Tell them to sound out the word, to use skills they have been taught, and the teacher may give word clues.	BU
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	Working on developing reading skills, phonic skills, and vocabulary.	BU
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	Vocabulary--motivation--skills--reading--extend.	BU
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Vocabulary should be introduced prior because the more words one knows the better comprehension.	BU
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Use strategies--sound it out or if necessary, just skip it.	BU
7	Information from testing	Vocabulary and knowledge of all skills.	BU
8	Instructional goals	To understand the story--increase vocabulary and ability to decode in order to help understand the story and identify facts about the story.	BU
9	Rationale for best reader	Reader A because context clues produced a word that made sense.	TD

\*Detailed responses are found in the text and are borderline responses.



### Orientations of Reading Instruction

For the purposes of this study, the overall score on the Theoretical Orientations to Reading Profile reflected belief systems of reading instruction according to the following scale: skills-based instruction 58-102 and literature-based instruction 103-140. Ms. Lee completed the survey with an overall score of 71, based on the instrument's specified scoring criteria (see Appendix I). This score categorized her as a strong supporter of a skills-based orientation to reading instruction.

Analysis of items that either required further information or were uncharacteristic of Ms. Lee's belief system provided clarity to her theoretical orientation to reading instruction. Fifty percent of the items reflective of a skills-based instructional model of reading fell in the lower section of the Likert rating score, which indicated strong support of this construct. Certain items on the instrument, however, prompted surprising responses. A few of the most relative ones are described to aid in understanding her beliefs. Ms. Lee responded with a middle-of-the-road response for two such items. When questioned for her reasoning, she commented on the item numbers 20 and 22, respectively:

I do agree that controlling text is an effective way to help children learn to read. However, I do not totally agree that exclusively using spelling patterns to control the text is the best way. Current basal stories are very interesting, but making sure that the vocabulary is appropriate or is taught in previous stories would be helpful. Phonics analysis is also a very important strategy to use when encountering new words, but I didn't agree with the way the question was written (the most important form).

Two of Ms. Lee's numerical responses were more consistent with a literature-based model of reading acquisition, yet explanations reflected more of a bottom-up theory. These items received additional attention because of scribbling written in the

margins and other signs (doubling markings, erasures) that encouraged me to explore explanations in a follow-up discussion.

Item 6: When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts.

Ms. Lee marked two responses to this question--1 (strongly agree) and 4 (disagree)--and wrote in the following explanation: "I strongly agree with this when students are reading for instructional purposes with the teacher. However, I disagree that children should take the time to sound out a word during reading. At this time they should just skip it, go on, and later we'll figure it out."

Item 10: It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading error occurs.

Ms. Lee explained that she disagreed with this statement because corrections during oral reading affected the flow of the reading and, therefore, hindered understanding. She felt that students should just skip the word, move on, and then the teacher and child remediate the problem at a later time.

Specific items were determined by DeFord (1979) to be more indicative of certain models of reading instruction. A "snapshot" view of the items most characteristic of a skills-based theoretical orientation to reading provides a more thorough understanding of Ms. Lee's belief system (see Table 5.13).

### Classroom Practices

#### A Typical Day

At 7:50, the children arrived in the classroom and quickly and orderly put their belongings in the storage bag on the back of their chairs. The morning activity sheet (see Figure 5.13) was on each desk, and the children immediately began working. This was an activity from the *Hooked on Phonics* (1992) series designed to be

sp	spot	span
spank	speck	sped
spell	spend	spent
spill	spin	spit

Figure 5.13.  
Activity sheet (Minnie Lee).

TABLE 5.13

TORP Items Reflecting Skills-Based Instruction (Minnie Lee)

Item	Statement	Score*
4	Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.	1
8	The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.	3
11	It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that will become a part of sight vocabulary.	1
13	It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.	1
14	Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.	5
16	Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).	1
19	Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho' to graph, pho tog' ra phy, pho to gra phic') should be developed as part of reading instruction.	3
24	Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.	3
25	It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.	1
28	Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped).	3

\*1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

functional for every level so that each student could independently attend to it as they were capable. General procedures were to trace over the letters, write additional words beginning with the given sound, color the background, and write sentences using the

words. Ms. Lee spent about 2 minutes taking care of routine morning details, and then she began to monitor, occasionally stopping to read a few of the words from the sheet with each child. At 8:05, the intercom announced the menu and schedule for the day, and the class stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The children returned to the activity sheet for another 5 minutes (see Figure 5.14).



Figure 5.14.  
Student at work (Minnie Lee).

Vocabulary time initiated the official beginning of reading class. Ms. Lee utilized a 5-day sequence of vocabulary study in which the same basic procedure was followed, but each day carried a different emphasis. Today's lesson was a review lesson. Ms. Lee moved to the front of the room and directed this whole-class teacher-directed vocabulary review. Ms. Lee retrieved a stack of word cards from the small table in the front of the room where she kept her materials for the day. It was obvious that the children were familiar with the routine, as the review immediately got underway. Ms. Lee held up a word card and called on a student to pronounce the word ("annoy"). She used a management system in which she pulled a name stick from a can each time she called on someone to participate. When all sticks had been pulled and all students had a chance to participate, the sticks were returned to the jar and the process continued. The child responded by saying, "Anno--anno--annoy." Ms. Lee praised the correct response and asked the child to use the word in a sentence, "The dog ignored me." Ms. Lee corrected the pronunciation and explained the sound difference in "ig-nore" and "an-noy," and a new sentence was

formed, “I annoy you sometimes.” Another student provided the meaning of the words “to bother.” Ms. Lee placed the word card on the hanging word chart, and the process continued with the remaining words. Once all words had been shared, Ms. Lee removed each word from the chart, and the class pronounced them together before the cards were put up for another day.

Next in the schedule was skill instruction (on Mondays only, basal reading occurred prior to skill instruction). Ms. Lee asked the children to think about the two letters that were in the top corner of their morning activity sheet (it was a coincidence that the two activities matched, as it was not planned). The class responded “s and p,” and Ms. Lee asked for the sound these two letters made and reminded them that it was called a blend. The children replied correctly, and Ms. Lee then used the chalkboard to demonstrate how this two-letter blend could become a three-letter blend, “s-p-r.” She used word cards to walk the students through the process of identifying the blends, pronouncing the words, and using the words in sentences. The students then opened their workbooks for practice. Ms. Lee read the directions to the class and directed the students to circle the three-letter blend in each word at the top of the page. The worksheet was completed as a class activity: She called on one student to pronounce the word, another to explain the meaning, one to select the correct sentence, and then all students entered the answer in their workbook. This procedure continued without variation, except for the two following exceptions: a child associated the word (“scream”) with a popular horror movie, but Ms. Lee kept the off-task behavior to a minimum; and the mispronunciation of one of the words prompted the following example to be placed on the board and discussed:

str /str/  
 ai /a/  
 gh silent  
 t /t/  
 straight

The class reviewed all of the “s” blends they had studied (two and three letters), put away their workbooks, and prepared for the next activity.

The students opened their readers to the table of contents and located the story while discussing the title, author, and illustrator. The students began choral reading. The noise was loud and several were reading ahead and/or behind the main group. Ms. Lee stopped the reading and said, “We have been following this procedure since August and you know that we start together and stay together and that we’ll do the exact same thing as always. I do not like waiting because I want to read. Now, are we ready?” The story was read completely, and Ms. Lee modeled excellent fluency and expression. She then instructed the students to return to the beginning for rereading. Prior to beginning, she reminded the students, “I’ll expect all of you to watch the words as someone else reads so you can learn the words, and if you are the reader and you see a word you do not know, say ‘blank’ and go on.” Ms. Lee called on individual students to read a paragraph or two, followed by a few brief questions, and then reading continued until recess. The children were not able to go outside for recess due to the weather, so they spent this time finishing an art project from the day before--a Christmas tree word search.

The designated reading period ended with recess; however, additional reading activities occurred throughout the day, as previously noted on Ms. Lee’s class schedule (see Table 5.11). Ms. Lee adhered very closely to her daily schedule, as

well as to specific days that hosted special activities. In order to fully explore a typical day of reading instruction, this narrative will continue with those instructional activities.

After morning recess (10:00) and through lunch (12:45), the children participated in various academic and nonacademic activities. After lunch, the children returned to the classroom anxious to relax and enjoy the read-aloud experience. Ms. Lee read a holiday book in its entirety and then allowed the students a few minutes to discuss it with her or among themselves. This activity lasted until 1:00 and afternoon recess.

After recess the children were engaged for about 25 minutes in spelling activities. At the conclusion of this activity, Ms. Lee told the students to get out their HBJ word list (Harris & Jacobson, 1972) and quickly review for their word test. The students had a weekly list of 20 words that they studied each night. The students received one half of the word list on Monday and the rest after the midweek test. The remaining words were then introduced, reviewed, and tested on Friday, today's activity. Ms. Lee called out the word, used it in a sentence, and the students recorded it on their paper. Immediately following the test, Ms. Lee had them glue the following week's new word list in their homework notebooks, pronounce the words, use them in context, and then put them up for home study.

The final reading activity, basic skill study, occurred for 30 minutes in the late afternoon, 1:45-2:15. This activity operated on a cycle that utilized the various supplemental skills materials Ms. Lee had purchased with her own funds. Today, the activity derived from the *Hooked on Phonics* (1993) program. The students faced Ms.

Lee who was standing at the front of the room holding word cards. The cassette tape began and the students recited the directives along with the tape. Ms. Lee held the word cards (see Figure 5.15), and the students recited the words with the tape, while observing the printed text. Each word card contained three words that were repeated

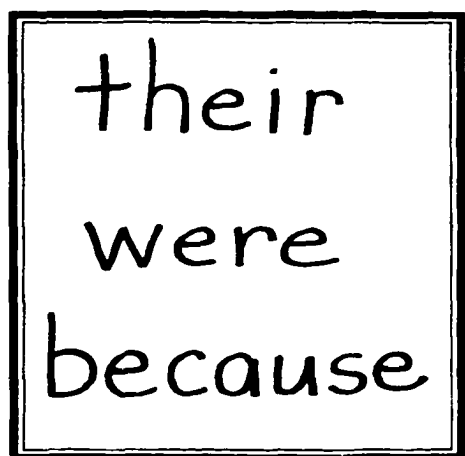


Figure 5.15.  
Word card (Minnie Lee).

three times each on the tape. The activity continued through approximately 20 words--each being repeated three times per card and each card (same words but different order) repeated three times. The children were very familiar with this activity, as they recited everything with the cassette, even the

"bing-bing-bing" sound to signify starting over and the "ok-1-2-3-let's go" chant to get the activity started.

#### Additional Observational Data

A basic overview of the reading practices implemented in Ms. Lee's second-grade classroom was illustrated in the preceding "typical day" scenario. These activities varied occasionally and some were representative of a sequence of activities that normally occurred over a one week period, yet Ms. Lee was relatively consistent with daily activities: basal vocabulary study, skill instruction, basal reading, read aloud, sight word study, and basic skills study. A glimpse of some of these additional activities are represented in the following overview of three additional reading observations (see



Table 5.14). A brief narrative description for one additional activity is also included, as it is representative of the strong bottom-up/skills-based orientation held by Ms. Lee. As a matter-of-fact, I did not observe this activity until I received a notice (see Figure 5.16) from Ms. Lee requesting that I return just for the purpose of observing these other activities.

Familiarity of basic sight words was an important part of Ms. Lee's lessons. In addition to the word study activities previously mentioned, Ms. Lee incorporated the study of the Dolch (1936) basic sight word list at least once per week. She had made a large flip chart booklet that contained the comprehensive word list through the second grade. Ms. Lee pointed to each word, the students repeated the word, Ms. Lee expounded on the word in some way (placed in context, definition, related to familiar words), and the students repeated the comment. For example:

Teacher:	"little" (points to word)
Students:	"little"
Teacher:	"tiny, small, miniature"
Students:	"tiny, small, miniature"
Teacher:	"opposite of big"
Student:	"opposite of big"
Teacher:	"little"
Student:	"little"

*Carrice,*  
*I regret that you did not see*  
*the following while collecting your*  
*data:*

- Using highlighter to identify the part of a paragraph that tells the answer to comprehension questions.*
- Using the Hooked on Phonics cassette tape with large flash cards.*
- Using a chart to promote familiarity with basic Dolch words + phrases.*

*These are not usually written on my lesson plans, but they are an important part of my reading instruction. We don't use all of these everyday, but we use them regularly. If you can stop by sometime, I'd like to stop what we're doing and show you these activities.*

**Figure 5.16.**

Request notice (Minnie Lee).

TABLE 5.14

Additional Observation Data (Minnie Lee)

Activity	Observation A	Observation B	Observation C
Motivation	Orally build background (winter activities).	Not observed.	Orally build background (wolves).
Vocabulary study	Detailed discussion "What can you tell me about this word?"	Flashcard study-- teacher pronounces, student repeats.	Word meanings-- use in a sentence, brainstorming.
Shared reading	Not observed.	Not observed.	Not observed.
Read aloud	Book read by teacher.	Book read by teacher.	Not observed.
Skills instruction	Oral/group study (homophones). Modern Curriculum Press workbook.	Looking for details-- read and locate details and highlight.	Oral review (diphthongs). <i>You Can Read</i> (video skills review).
Buddy reading	Not observed.	Not observed.	Not observed.
Independent reading	Not observed.	Read when finish task.	Library visit.
Writing activity	Vocabulary words used in a story.	Not observed.	Not observed.
Basal reading	Choral reading.	Silent reading.	Choral/oral reading.
Enrichment	Worksheet art project.	Holiday word find.	Not observed.

The students enjoyed this activity because it moved quickly, they had to listen in order to repeat what Ms. Lee said, and it was somewhat noisy.

### Theoretical Constructs Relationships

Minnie Lee's theoretical beliefs about how reading develops and instructional beliefs about how reading takes place were reflected as strong bottom-up/skills-based. This means that at least 90% of her interview responses were conceptually related to a part to whole belief and approach to reading. To illustrate the consistencies and inconsistencies of Ms. Lee's theoretical beliefs and pedagogical practices, categorization criteria and belief statements are used as a point of reference (see Table 5.15), in conjunction with an overall descriptive narrative. The listed instructional practices are not inclusive and, therefore, only serve as a representative sample of observed practices.

### Consistencies

The instructional practices observed in Ms. Lee's classroom strongly support her stated beliefs. Every observation provided evidence of the importance she placed on vocabulary and skill acquisition. The students were immersed in opportunities to work with sounds and other components associated with this construct (decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary).

Vocabulary development and skills instruction were emphasized in Ms. Lee's classroom and were taught conjunctively as much as possible. Ms. Lee felt that students need to not only be able to recognize vocabulary words but also to understand the meaning of the words in order to successfully read a text. Vocabulary words were generally presented in a rote fashion. Ms. Lee usually presented the word on the board or on a

TABLE 5.15

Beliefs and Practices: Consistencies and Inconsistencies (Minnie Lee)

Theoretical Beliefs	Consistent Practices	Inconsistent Practices
Accuracy in recognizing words is important. Phonics before reading. Sight word instruction.	Introduction of vocabulary prior to basal instruction. Flashcard study. Skill instruction prior to reading. HBJ & Dolch sight word study.	Not observed.
Comprehension does require recognition of every word. Controlled text. Get main ideas, detail.	<i>You Can Read</i> video (sounds and controlled text). Highlighting activity for details. Vocabulary meaning.	Child instructed to skip unknown when reading.
Students use word and sound-letter cues exclusively to produce and process text. Cueing systems used.	Sound-letter cues used for unknown words. Word attack skills stressed.	Word meaning stressed.
Learning to read requires mastering and integrating a series of word recognition skills. Phonics .	Sight word recognition. Identifying chunks of words and other word features. Word dissecting activity. <i>Hooked on Phonics</i> work. Modern Curr. Press workbook.	Not observed.
Instructional emphasis on lower level language units. Letters/sounds. Words.	<i>Hooked on Phonics</i> and <i>You Can Read</i> (letter/sound activities). Isolated skill instruction--basal. Vocabulary recognition stressed.	Not observed.
Teacher and students direct instruction.	Most all activities are teacher directed and in large groups.	Not observed.
Evaluation on discrete skills.	Worksheets on skills. HBJ word test.	Not observed.

flashcard and provided the correct pronunciation. This then initiated extensive word study that took different forms: the words were dissected phonetically, meaning was attached to the word and/or parts of the word, forms of the word were discussed, similar words (spelling, meaning, letter/sound, usage) were studied, and numerous other vocabulary extensions were shared. Although it appeared that an inordinate amount of time was spent on word recognition, it must be noted that many other skills were interwoven into the discussion and extension activities. Ms. Lee's practices were generally consistent with all areas identified in this study as theoretical beliefs of a bottom-up/skills-based construct.

### Inconsistencies

Minnie Lees instructional practices were closely related to her professed stance regarding reading acquisition. One minor discrepancy was noted regarding the notion that every word must be recognized in order for comprehension to occur. Ms. Lee directed her students to skip an unknown word when reading. She did not advocate skipping it momentarily in order to use context for meaning (top-down construct) but to skip it in order to avoid slowing down the fluency of the reading. Ms. Lee attended to decoding the word phonetically but at a later date.

The only other area that supported any evidence of inconsistency is the importance that Ms. Lee placed on students attaching meaning to each vocabulary word. However, the emphasis was placed on word meaning, not passage meaning; and for the most part, the word meaning was obtained by direct teacher information rather than obtaining it by reading. Both of the issues shared in this section are not really inconsistencies because the overall category for these concepts would still be rated as

skills-based practices. They were primarily mentioned to further understand the strong commitment held by Ms. Lee regarding her beliefs and practices.

### Summary/Reflection

Minnie Lee was categorized as holding a strong bottom-up/skills-based conceptual framework of reading based on her responses to the Theoretical Orientation to Reading and the Reading Belief Interview. Based on my observations, I concur that this is an accurate identification of her position.

Ms. Lee placed much instructional emphasis on words. She not only stressed the importance of introducing vocabulary before students read a selection but stressed the importance of vocabulary in general. She also emphasized that word meaning was just as needed as word recognition.

Ms. Lee had a lot of confidence in herself and in her instructional practices. In our initial interview, Ms. Lee mentioned a past principal who had influenced her beliefs regarding the need for strong, direct, skills-based instruction. It was evident that Ms. Lee acquiesced to this belief.

## **Case Study #4--Sheryl Hill**

### General Characteristics

#### The School

Iris Elementary was a kindergarten through grade 8 school located in the small rural village of Iris. The staff of 20 certified educators equated to 1 principal, 1 special education teacher, and 18 regular education teachers. Three itinerant teachers served the students part-time in music and physical education. Two teacher assistants were employed--one to assist kindergarten and first grade teachers and the other to operate

the computer reading lab. At the time of this study, this staff served approximately 240 students, 82% European-American and 18% African-American. For the past 3 years, Iris Elementary had been served as a Title 1 targeted assistance school, due to the percentage (45%) of students participating in the federal free and reduced lunch program. This classification meant that Title 1 funds were to primarily be used to address the needs of at-risk students only, instead of assisting all students as allowed in a schoolwide program.

The school administration supported the use of the districtwide basal but encouraged teachers to use a variety of strategies while trying to reach the needs of all the students at Iris Elementary. In the past few years, special emphasis had been placed on the implementation of computer reading and motivational programs, as major vehicles for improving reading and skills development.

### The Students

Ten boys and nine girls comprised Ms. Hill's second-grade class. Ms. Hill's knowledge about her students, coupled with the results of a parishwide reading placement test administered early in the school year, provided the following profile: 4 students reading on level, 13 reading above level, and 2 reading below level. One child was identified as experiencing major reading problems and was recently referred for special education services.

### The Teacher

Ms. Hill was a 33-year-old teacher with a bachelors degree in elementary education and a masters degree in counseling. She had taught for 11 years at Iris Elementary prior to taking a 1-year professional sabbatical to obtain a degree in

counseling. When asked to share why she chose to pursue a degree in counseling, Ms.

Hill responded,

I became a teacher because I wanted to make a positive difference in the academic life of a child. As I grew as a teacher, I realized that some children really needed a positive influence emotionally as well as academically, and I wanted to be ready to make that difference.

Ms. Hill's teaching experience of 13 years had all been in first and second grades. She stated that she enjoyed her 10 years as a first-grade teacher mainly because "I got to teach in the room I had attended as a first-grade child and with the teacher who had taught me, my mother." She remarked, however, that she was glad when an opportunity arrived for her to move to second grade because "[The students] are more mature and already know how to read--at least to some degree." She added with a chuckle, "Also, after 30 years my mother decided to move to kindergarten at this same time."

### The Classroom

Ms. Hill's classroom was very neat with four rows of five desks facing the front of the room. Her desk was located in the front left corner of the room and provided easy access to materials placed there for the day's activities. Shelves lined two of the classroom walls: those located in the back of the room provided storage space for the teacher as well as art materials, and those located under the wall-length windows housed library books and other supplemental curriculum materials. The walls and window blinds were decorated with commercial educational posters, charts, and students' work. Bulletin boards hung across one wall and were used to display the monthly bulletin board, a content-related board (currently the vocabulary words from the basal story), and progress charts for the reading incentive program being

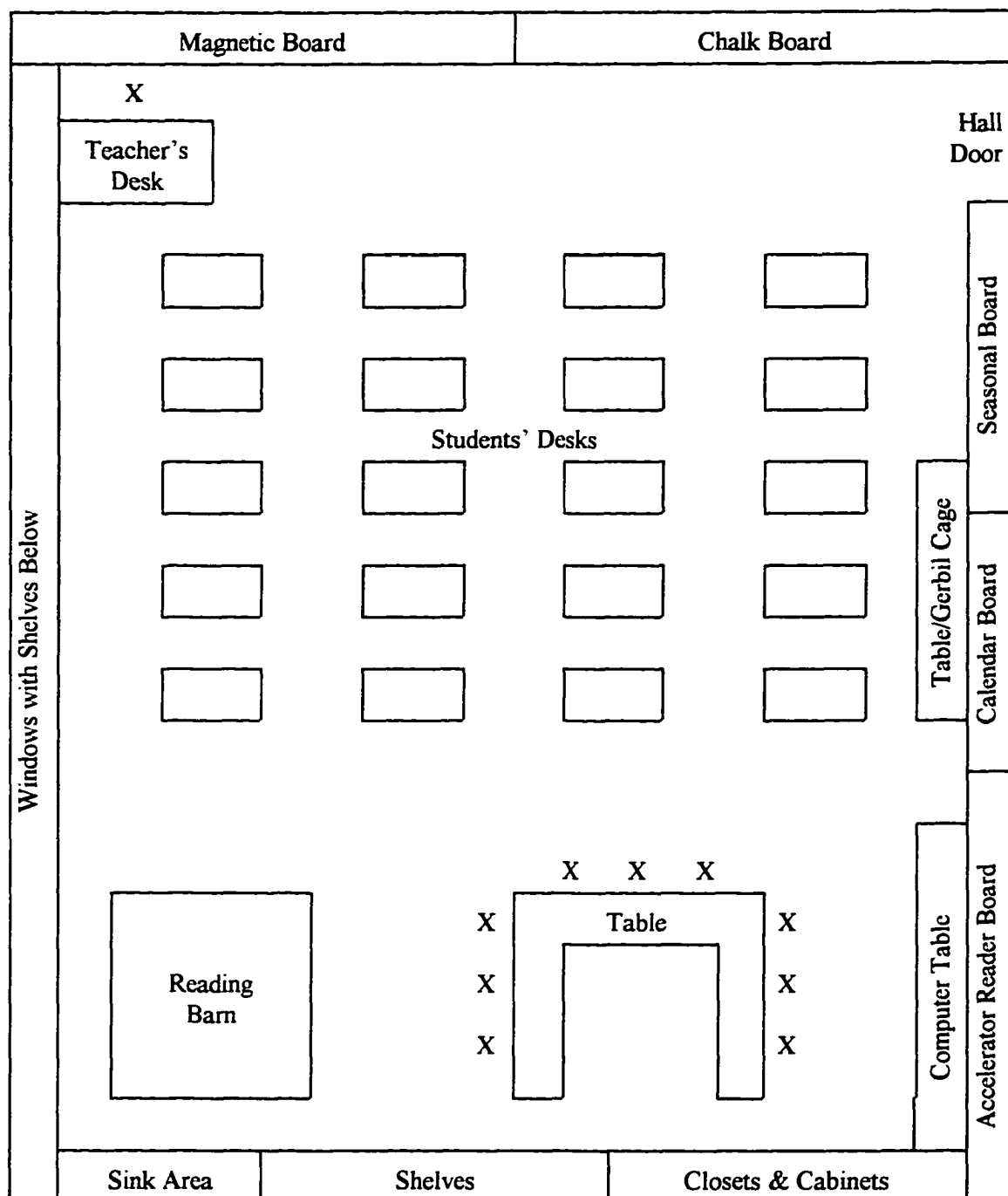


implemented throughout the school. The front wall provided both a chalkboard and a magnetic board. A three-sided table was located in the rear of the room beside the “reading barn,” an area enclosed by a barn-like structure. A computer had recently been installed in one corner of the room so the students could participate in the Accelerated Reader program, a reading incentive program, without going to the library. Ms. Hill’s classroom floor plan (see Figure 5.17) provides a visual depiction of this design.

The classes at Iris Elementary began earlier than in other classes within the school district, due to district consolidation resulting in high school students being required to travel into the neighboring town. The children entered the classroom as early as 7:45 and began working on their morning activities (worksheets reinforcing the skill from the previous day’s lesson). Those students who completed their activities prior to the official bell could read library books at their desks. The students arrived, put away their belongings, and independently began completing the morning activity. Table 5.16 portrays Ms. Hill’s daily schedule.

TABLE 5.16  
Daily Schedule (Sheryl Hill)

Time	Activity
7:45 - 8:00	Homeroom
8:00 - 9:30	Language Arts
9:30 - 9:45	Recess
9:45 - 11:00	Language Arts
11:00 - 12:00	Lunch/Recess
12:00 - 1:00	Math
1:00 - 1:30	Science/Social Studies
1:30 - 1:50	Recess
1:50 - 2:20	Science/Social Studies
2:20 - 3:00	Arts/Crafts/P.E.
3:00 - 3:10	Dismissal



**Figure 5.17.**  
Classroom floor plan (Sheryl Hill).

An initial “snapshot” glimpse of Ms. Hill’s classroom provides reflections characteristic of both skills-based and literature-based educational settings. The reading barn and small-group table located in the rear of the room suggested the possibility of center activities, yet the rows of desks, organized structure of the morning materials and activities, and a lack of visible center materials projected a different message.

### Theoretical Orientations

Based on responses to the Reading Belief Interview and the Theoretical Orientations to Reading Profile, Ms. Hill’s theoretical beliefs about how reading develops and how reading occurs were categorized as moderate bottom-up/skills-based. The following subsections provide a descriptive review of Sheryl Hill’s theoretical orientations to reading.

#### Orientations of the Reading Process

Ms. Hill’s responses to the Reading Belief Interview were scored according to established criteria (see Appendix H), and final analysis revealed seven and one-half responses that showed her conceptual framework to reading to be best representative of a bottom-up construct. The results also yielded two strong responses in support of the opposing model of reading, and one response indicated an overlap in her thoughts regarding one particular issue.

Item 6 of the instrument asked the teacher to consider the action(s) she would hope her students would take when they encountered an unknown word while reading silently. Ms. Hill responded to the prompt in a quick and matter-of-fact manner, “I’d want them to sound it out and get clues from the rest of the sentence.” The initial “sound it out” is strongly indicative of her professed belief, yet the second part of her

response is acceptable as top-down. I asked Ms. Hill to repeat her response, thinking perhaps she would realize what she said and/or clarify the response in some way. However, she repeated her response almost verbatim and with conviction, so I discontinued probing and scored the item as partially correct for both construct systems.

The two interview questions that initially elicited responses in opposition to Ms. Hill's categorized belief produced the same response when reiterated in the follow-up interview. The interview item that required Ms. Hill to consider the type of information she would like to obtain from diagnostic testing resulted in the following response: (a) comprehension where they read and responded to questions, (b) vocabulary recognition, (c) recognition of sounds (beginning/ending/vowels) and (d) skills (sequencing). As noted from this response, she basically wanted a test that would provide information deemed important by advocates of bottom-up models. However, I scored the item as indicative of a top-down construct due to the fact that her first concern dealt with comprehension.

When asked, "Of all the goals for reading that you have as a teacher, which do you think you have accomplished this year and why?" Ms. Hill smiled and said, "My goal is to make it fun because they will try to learn more. I think I've done a good job so far of accomplishing that task." This response definitely earned a top-down rating as increasing students' enjoyment of reading is a major component of that model.

The rest of Ms Hill responses were rated bottom-up. The degree of commitment to some items were, of course, stronger than others, yet all emphasized the teaching of skills as a major goal of the reading program. A complete review of Ms.

Hill's responses to all of the interview questions is provided in the following rating chart (see Table 5.17) providing ample evidence of a bottom-up orientation to the reading process.

### Orientations of Reading Instruction

Ms. Hill completed the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile with an overall score of 75, based on the instrument's specified scoring criteria (see Appendix I). For the purposes of this study, the acceptable ranges of responses are identified as 58-102 for skills-based instruction and 103-140 for literature-based instruction. The overall score of 75 then categorized her as a supporter of a skills-based orientation to reading instruction.

Specific items on the survey instrument are geared to elicit responses more identifiable with one construct system. To provide a visual glimpse of Ms. Hill's beliefs about reading acquisition, the items designed to more specifically represent the skills-based orientation to reading instruction are listed in Table 5.18.

Ms. Hill's overall score is quite supportive of a skills-based belief regarding reading acquisition; however, 60% of the items identified as highly indicative of this construct received a middle-of-the-road response rather than a stronger commitment of agreement. When I questioned Ms. Hill for her justification, she remarked that most of the items received that score because of the way the statements were written and that one's interpretation, at the time, could affect the response. A few of the items, however, received clearer rationales and/or comments regarding her clarification. Items 21 and 22 referred to the necessity of formal instruction to ensure reading skills

TABLE 5.17

Interview Responses (Sheryl Hill)

Item	Interview Probe	Responses	Score
2a	Oral reading error	Tell them to stop--look at the word--sound it out--tell them the word.	BU
2b	Oral reading--unknown word	Look at the word--sound it out--teacher tells them the word.	BU
3a 3b	Most important activity/ Majority of time spent in this activity	Skills activities because without the skills they cannot read the words and then comprehend.	BU
4	Rank ordering of a DRA lesson	Skills--motivation--reading--questions and discussions--vocabulary.	BU
5	Preintroduction of vocabulary words	Yes, so that they know the words when encountered in the story.	BU
6	Silent reading--unknown words	Sound it out--get clues from the sentence.	BU TD
7	Information from testing	Comprehension--vocabulary--recognition of sounds--skills.	TD
8	Instructional goals	To make it fun so they will try to learn more.	TD
9	Rationale for best reader	Reader C because tried to find a word that sounded like the given word.	BU

TABLE 5.18

TORP Items Reflecting Skills-Based Instruction (Sheryl Hill)

Item	Statement	Score
4	Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.	2
8	The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.	2
11	It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.	1
13	It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.	3
14	Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.	3
16	Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).	3
19	Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho' to graph, pho tog' ra phy, pho to gra phic') should be developed as part of reading instruction.	3
24	Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.	3
25	It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.	3
28	Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped).	2

1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

development and to the importance of phonics analysis in attacking new words, respectively. Mrs. Hill remarked,

Yes, I think that most students must be taught skills, but for some reason I read it to possibly mean that a specified formal program should be used. If it refers to teacher-directed instruction, then I need to adjust my score. In regards to the use of phonics when meeting new words, I think it is very important. I just seem to always hesitate when I see the word “most of the time” in a question.

Item 25 was addressed in our interview because Ms. Hill’s score of 3 did not appear to be aligned with earlier comments regarding the importance she placed on skill development.

Item 25 : It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.  
The words “in relation to other skills” affected my rating. I agree that some skills are built on other skills and, therefore, need to be taught in relation to each other. However, another interpretation came to my mind--that this could have meant that skills must be taught in context and authentic situations. I feel it is important to provide children with opportunities to use their skills in real situations, but many times I feel that the skill can and should be directly presented to the students and then practiced and practiced.

Ms. Hill’s responses to a few other survey items are justified in receiving additional attention, as I feel that they provide a deeper understanding of her beliefs about reading instruction. Questions that related to phonics, letters/sounds (items 1, 6, 17), and word recognition (items 11, 18, 27) all received ratings confirming her belief that vocabulary should emphatically be taught prior to reading and that knowledge of phonics rules and using them to attack words was deeply rooted in Ms. Hill’s belief about how reading should be taught.



## Classroom Practices

### A Typical Day

Ms. Hill's classroom came alive at 7:45 as the children arrived. Coats and book bags were hung up, pencils sharpened, and other "getting settled" routines were attended. The students retrieved a copy of the morning activity sheet from the work table and began completing the task. This morning's activity sheet was an extension of a skill activity studied yesterday during reading. The children had to identify the "ed" words at the top of the page and then complete the sentences at the bottom, using the appropriate words. As the children completed the task, they had an opportunity to participate in free reading time--actually time to read the Accelerated Reader books they recently received from the library. One child finished his book and moved to the computer, located in the rear of the room, to take the test that accompanied the book. During this "morning routine" time, Ms. Hill attended to the roll and other housekeeping chores and at 8:05 called the class to attention. The children who had completed the morning activity worksheet placed their papers on the corner of their desks and continued reading. Ms. Hill checked each paper and gave assistance to those experiencing difficulty. I observed that each time she helped a child, she recited a phonics rule that would help him or her figure out the word. One child, in particular, had trouble pronouncing the words, and Ms. Hill addressed each word in a manner similar to this:

This word has two vowels sitting side-by-side, so the rule says that the first one is long and the second one is silent. Say it with me. Child and teacher repeated the rule. Now the word is "need" so if we add "ed" we have "needed." Say the word with me.

While Ms. Hill was assisting students and checking papers, she stopped where I was sitting and said, “I know that this takes time, but I think I should grade every paper they do. But it is also their free reading time so I do not feel that its wasted time.” I observed that the students who were reading did so at their seats (see Figure 5.18), not in the “reading barn.”



**Figure 5.18.**  
Free reading time (Sheryl Hill).

At 8:15, Ms. Hill announced that it was time to put everything away and get ready for reading. The students placed their basal readers on the desks and looked at the teacher, who had moved to the front of the room. Ms. Hill drew two columns on the dry-erase board and labeled them “real” and “make believe.” She initiated a brief discussion regarding the phase or event

that was listed on each of the skill cards being used. The students identified the event listed as either a real or make-believe event, and the teacher entered it in the correct category.

football game	real
clown crying	real
bears talking	make believe
reading a book	real
monkeys dancing	make believe

Ms. Hill reviewed the main events from yesterday’s story and instructed the students to open their books. She prepared them for the second reading of the story and prompted them to listen for things in the story and to look at the pictures that could be real or make believe.

The children stood by their desks for choral reading (see Figure 5.19). Ms. Hill remained at the front of the room directing the reading. Prior to reading each page, the class discussed each picture in detail but did not identify classification at this time. After the class read about one half of the story, Ms. Hill changed the method of reading to

oral reading. Everyone sat down except for the designated reader. Each child read one page while Ms. Hill stood beside him or her. During oral reading, I observed students making two errors and being unable to recognize one word. The teacher immediately corrected both oral reading



Figure 5.19.  
Choral reading (Sheryl Hill).

errors by simply stating the word. Each child stopped reading when Ms. Hill spoke, repeated the word, and continued reading. The child who encountered the unknown word stopped at the word and looked at Ms. Hill. She asked him if he could sound out the word, and he replied, "No, ma'am"; so she supplied the word and reading continued. A brief oral comprehension activity followed the oral reading. Each question that Ms. Hill asked regarding story events resulted in an answer that was orally classified as real or make believe and entered on the board.

The next activity in the reading block was independent skill practice. The workbooks that complemented the basal reader were generally used at this time. Ms. Hill and the children quickly reviewed the concept of real and make believe, and then workbooks were opened. Ms. Hill and the students read the short story together, then

Ms. Hill gave directions, and the students independently completed the activity. Ms. Hill monitored the work, offered assistance when needed, and gave signs of approval (wink, nod, thumbs-up) when earned. Papers were checked orally and put away. Ms. Hill commented that they normally completed several workbook pages at this time but that she had removed some of the pages in order to make a booklet for future use.

The next activity combined vocabulary and skill review. Ms. Hill removed the balloon vocabulary cards (part of the content board display) from the bulletin board and reminded the children that these were words they had studied yesterday. She displayed each word, and the students orally responded with the pronunciation. Once all of the words had been presented, Ms. Hill selected a dictionary from the shelf and explained that it would provide the meaning for the words. A vocabulary word was displayed, and Ms. Hill demonstrated how to locate the word in the dictionary. She located the word and shared the meaning with the class. This procedure continued for several words until Ms. Hill explained that she already had the definitions written on the back of the word cards and did not need to continue using the dictionary but had wanted them to see where the definitions originated. Ms. Hill and the students continued the vocabulary study in this manner: word displayed, word pronounced by the class, definition provided by the teacher, and the word and definition repeated by the students.

The children were dismissed for recess, and language arts continued when they returned. Ms. Hill shared a poem with the class. She reminded the students of the cinquains they had previously written and explained that they were going to write a

lantern poem today. Ms. Hill presented the procedure on the board walking the students through each step:

Line 1 = noun - 1 syllable  
 Line 2 = adjective(s) to describe noun - 2 syllables  
 Line 3 = adjective(s) to describe noun - 3 syllables  
 Line 4 = adjective(s) to describe noun - 4 syllables  
 Line 5 = adjective to describe noun - 1 syllable

The children and Ms. Hill walked through the process of writing a class poem, taking time to review nouns, adjectives, and syllables.

Tree  
 Tall, green  
 Give us shade  
 Leafy giant  
 Strong

The children were now excited and ready to write their own poems. Ms. Hill distributed paper and got everyone started. The children worked independently, while Ms. Hill provided assistance and checked for correct spelling and other errors. She did not correct the papers while the students were working, but as they finished, hands were raised for her approval. Once her corrections were made (see Figure 5.20), students rewrote their finished poems on the lantern pattern (see Figure 5.21). The lanterns were collected and displayed in the hall.

The rest of the day was spent working in other content areas, enrichment classes, and nonacademic activities. A brief oral review of the day's activities, including reading, was conducted right before children prepared to go home. I observed that Ms. Hill extended the reading lesson by continually encouraging the children to read their library books whenever tasks were completed.

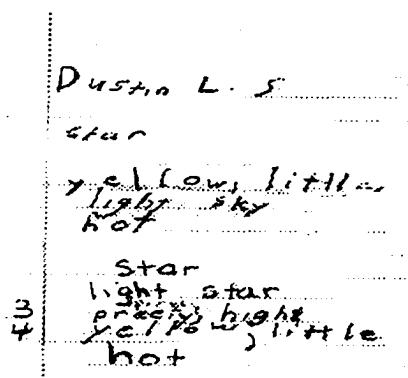


Figure 5.20.  
Writing draft (Sheryl Hill).

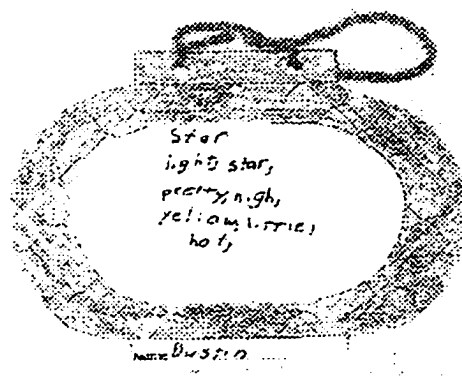


Figure 5.21.  
Writing finished product (Sheryl Hill).

### Additional Observation Data

The “typical day” illustration presented in the previous section provided a basic overview of the reading practices implemented in Ms. Hill’s second-grade classroom: morning activity, skill review, basal reading, skill instruction and practice, vocabulary study (except on day 1 of the lesson, and then it precedes basal reading), and extension activity. The intensity of these activities varied but were usually prevalent in every lesson. The extension activities were the only area that could not be classified as routine, as they varied in both content and occurrence. Additional activities as well as varied forms of these “routine” practices were observed on three additional observations (see Table 5.19).

### Theoretical Constructs Relationships

Sheryl Hill was categorized as holding a moderate bottom-up/skills-based conceptual framework of reading. This categorization means that she gave responses to interview items that were rated as both top-down and bottom-up, yet she was generally more responsive to a part-to-whole belief about reading. In addition, her

TABLE 5.19

Additional Observation Data (Sheryl Hill)

Activity	Observation A	Observation B	Observation C
Motivation	Review story details in a game-like activity (relay).	Not observed.	Teacher shared a personal experience to set the stage.
Vocabulary study	Look up vocabulary words in dictionary for definitions.	Flashcard study-- teacher pronounces, student repeats.	Oral recitation and use words in sentences.
Shared reading	Not observed.	Not observed.	Poem written in the writing lesson.
Read aloud	Not observed.	Book read by teacher.	Not observed.
Skills instruction	Guide words worksheet. Digraphs.	Root words and endings study-- workbook and worksheet.	Oral review of sounds of "oi" and "oy"--workbook. Abc order sheet.
Buddy reading	Not observed.	Not observed.	Not observed.
Independent reading	Time allowed when tasks completed.	Time allowed when tasks completed.	Time allowed when tasks completed.
Writing activity	Wrote a cinquain.	Not observed.	Wrote a class poem about Halloween.
Basal reading	Choral reading.	Silent/oral reading.	Choral/oral reading.
Enrichment	Not observed.	Not observed.	Drew pictures to illustrate poem.

survey responses represented an instructional emphasis of lower level linguistic units.

Belief assumptions and instructional implications are used as a point of reference to

illustrate the consistencies and inconsistencies of Ms. Hill's theoretical beliefs and

pedagogical practices (see Table 5.20). The practices listed are not inclusive of observed practices but serve as a representative sample.

### Consistencies

The instructional practices Ms. Hill implemented in her classroom strongly support her stated beliefs. Every observation provided evidence of the importance she placed on vocabulary and skill development. Vocabulary building exercises were constant. Formal instruction involved frequent work with flash cards and rote recitation. Word meaning was always stressed, as Ms. Hill was consistent in her endeavors to continually provide definitions for the children to explore. Vocabulary was extensively used as a catalyst for phonics and skill study. The words were analyzed for spelling patterns, letter-sound connections, affixes, similar words, antonyms, and numerous other skill-related vocabulary extension activities.

Direct teacher instruction was prevalent in Ms. Hill's classroom. Every observed activity generated from her initiation; she participated in each activity with the students and then closed each activity. The students were vocally involved and were free to interject, yet the teacher was always at the center of the activity. Comprehension of story details and facts was stressed. Numerous questions were generated from each encounter with text, both those prescribed in the basal teacher's guide and impromptu ones. However, the questions were always teacher initiated and teacher directed.

### Inconsistencies

Ms. Hill's classroom was a constant source of activity as students were free to interact with one another and the teacher. The atmosphere was very open for discussion and sharing, yet most of these sharing opportunities were either based on



TABLE 5.20

Beliefs and Practices: Consistencies and Inconsistencies (Sheryl Hill)

Theoretical Beliefs	Consistent Practices	Inconsistent Practices
Accuracy in recognizing words is important. Phonics before reading. Sight word instruction.	Introduction of vocabulary prior to basal instruction. Flashcard study.	Not observed.
Comprehension does require recognition of every word. Controlled text. Get main ideas, detail.	Vocabulary definitions. Word recognition, oral errors and unknown words, stressed and corrected as needed.	Not observed.
Students use word and sound-letter cues exclusively to produce and process text. Cueing systems used.	Sound-letter cues used for unknown words. Word-attack skills stressed. "Sound it out."	Teacher constantly talks with the students and probes for them to think about the story, etc.
Learning to read requires mastering and integrating a series of word recognition skills. Phonics.	Sight word recognition. Identifying chunks of words and other word features. Constant word dissecting activity. Additional phonics workbook.	Not observed.
Instructional emphasis on lower level language units. Letters/sounds. Words.	Sounds "oi" "ou" in isolation. Isolated skill instruction-- basal. Vocabulary recognition stressed. Skill instruction prior to reading.	Not observed.
Teacher and students direct instruction.	Most all activities are teacher directed and in large groups.	Dictionary study as cooperative activity.
Evaluation on discrete skills.	Worksheets on skills.	Not observed.

information provided by the teacher, rather than students deriving meaning on their own, or simply due to the loving and warm atmosphere created by the teacher. On one occasion the students participated in a cooperative learning activity to locate vocabulary words in the dictionary using guide words (one of the day's skills). The children worked together in locating the information; however, they were still required to independently complete the workbook page that was guiding the activity and submit it for checking.

Ms. Hill continuously emphasized the importance of vocabulary and word meaning. Every new word that was presented was defined in some manner so that the students were aware of the meaning. At first glance, this strong commitment to meaning appears to be in direct conflict with Ms. Hill's theoretical belief. In most cases, however, in most cases the emphasis was placed on word meaning not passage meaning, and the meaning was derived in contrived fashions directed by the Ms. Hill, rather than the children deriving the meaning from reading.

#### Summary/Reflection

Sheryl Hill was identified as holding a moderate bottom-up/skills-based conceptual framework or reading based on her responses to the Reading Belief Interview and the Theoretical Orientations to Reading Profile. My observations confirm that this is an accurate identification of her position.

Ms. Hill placed much value on the importance of providing students with the vocabulary and skill knowledge they needed to become, in her words, "good" readers. Both vocabulary and skill information were taught, reviewed, and reinforced prior to

reading experiences, as reading appeared to be a means of strengthening these skills rather than a skill within itself.

Ms. Hill exerted authority as she was in charge of the learning that occurred in her classroom. However, the classroom atmosphere was extremely warm and the children were free to interact with each other and the teacher on a free and continuous basis. Ms. Hill mentioned in our interview that allowing students to have fun was an excellent way to make them want to learn the skills necessary for reading success. Although the classroom was very teacher-directed, it allowed much oral interaction and the children appeared to enjoy the class and the activities.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

Reading instruction based on theoretical beliefs has experienced several paradigm shifts from one perspective to another. A debate has persisted in recent years because of the various distinct types of classrooms epitomizing the philosophical continuum. I also view this instructional continuum regarding reading development from a philosophical stance because I find it difficult to discuss practice without process. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I looked at both ends of the instructional continuum, skills-based and literature-based, in conjunction with the two main types of information-processing models, top-down and bottom-up, in order to answer the research questions postulated in this investigation:

1. What are the teachers' beliefs regarding how reading takes place and how reading develops?
2. How do the teachers implement reading instruction in their classrooms?
3. Is there a relationship between the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices in providing appropriate reading instruction?

#### **Findings**

The study procedures were designed to utilize, to the extent possible, the subjects' own words and actions when describing educational beliefs and practices and

to then verify the consonance of stated beliefs and observed practices to actuality through classroom observations. This method was employed extensively, as reported in Chapter 5, and it provides a thorough review of each category in relation to the three research questions. For this reason, the findings related to each research question will be addressed as an overall narrative summation of each study participant, and I refer the reader to Chapter 5 for a deeper description--see sections entitled: Theoretical Orientations, Classroom Practices, and Theoretical Constructs Relationships within each case study description.

Question #1:  
Teachers' Beliefs About Reading

“What makes a good teacher is a highly personal matter having to do with their personal system of beliefs” (Combs, 1982, p.3).

The first question addressed in this research report is, “What are teachers’ beliefs regarding how reading takes place and how reading develops?” To determine the construct systems held by the participants, they were exposed to two sets of questions designed to elicit their declared beliefs about how learning to read occurs in general, and then more specifically how reading should be taught. In most cases, learning to read and teaching reading were melded together in their discussions about their beliefs. The Reading Belief Interview (RBI) and the Theoretical Orientations to Reading Profile (TORP) (DeFord, 1979) were administered to participants in order to obtain their professed theoretical orientations to reading.

The RBI is a 10-question instrument designed to yield an overall rating of a teacher’s conceptual framework of how reading takes place in view of the two main

information-processing models utilized in this study: top-down and bottom-up.

Proponents of top-down belief systems assert that: reading for meaning is essential, reading is conceptualized in a whole-to-part fashion, and reading begins with the reader not the text. Proponents advocating bottom-up belief systems allege that: reading starts at the bottom (with the text and lower level skills) and moves toward the top (higher level skills), and word recognition is essential in deriving at meaning.

The TORP is a 28-item survey designed to help determine a teacher's theoretical orientation to how reading develops via skills-based or literature-based instruction. For this study, a score of 58-102 reflected a skills-based instructional construct, and a literature-based orientation score ranged from 103-140. Skills-based advocates believe that learning to read requires the acquisition of skills taught in a hierarchical manner. These classrooms support the management and teaching of all skills. Literature-based instruction stresses that reading is the most important component of classroom life. Teachers holding this construct focus on meaning, interest, and enjoyment while learning in their "community" classroom. Table 6.1 provides an overall view of the results of the administration of the Reading Belief Interview and the Theoretical Orientation of Reading Profile.

Ms. Jones was identified as holding a strong top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading. She stressed the importance of immersing students in the learning environment and promoted continual interaction among students and teacher. Ms. Jones held a strong commitment to the need to teach vocabulary and correct oral reading errors, as she viewed these as important components of the reading experience. However, she believed that these

TABLE 6.1  
Participants' Belief Summary

Participants	Interview Results	TORP Results	Overall Beliefs
Susie Jones	9 Top-down/1 bottom-up Strong top-down	119 Lit-based	Strong top-down Literature-based
Marilyn Doe	7 Top-down/3 bottom-up Moderate top-down	112 Lit-based	Moderate top-down Literature-based
Minnie Lee	9 Bottom-up/1 top-down Strong bottom-up	71 Skills-based	Strong bottom-up Skills-based
Sheryl Hill	7.5 Bottom-up/2.5 top-down Moderate bottom-up	75 Skills-based	Moderate bottom-up Skills-based

occur in a whole-to-part fashion in which the students must be constantly involved in reading, predicting, role-playing, and talking in general.

Ms. Doe was categorized as holding a moderate top-down/literature-based belief system. She emphasized that reading was so complex that the responsibility was often frightening and that the only way she knew to handle it was to make reading fun for the students and herself. Ms. Doe believed that all skills and reading tasks can be taught through a lot of interaction, verbal and physical, and by engaging students in reading. She reiterated several times in our visits that the noise in her classroom was often much louder than in her colleagues' due to the prevalence of discussions and interactions. However, she believed that children must be able to draw on personal experiences and prior knowledge and that many of her students were lacking in this area. Therefore activities that build their knowledge of the world were needed in order for comprehension to occur.

Ms. Lee was identified as holding a strong bottom-up theoretical orientation to reading. She placed much emphasis on students' knowledge of phonics skills and word recognition. She believed that fluency in reading was essential in comprehension and that immediate knowledge of words, by sight or prompt adherence to decoding rules, was consequently necessary. Ms. Lee viewed her responsibility as the teacher to provide the students with as much information and practice as possible and that direct, structured learning experiences best provide this opportunity.

Ms. Hill was classified as holding a moderate skills-based construct of reading. She placed much value on the importance of providing students with the vocabulary and skill knowledge they needed. She viewed herself as the instructional leader with the responsibility of providing students with all the needed information for learning to read. She valued the importance of reading to children and allowing them opportunities to read, but she felt that they learn best when the task is broken down into specific skills to be taught by the teacher.

#### Question #2: Teachers' Practices in Reading

It is important that we, as teachers, reflect on our practice, as Morine-Dersheimer (1987) suggests, "Our theory must be constantly tested and reshaped by our practice, and our practice must be constantly reshaped by our theory" (p. 65).

Question 2 addressed the issue, "How do the teachers implement reading instruction in their classroom?" The observation of teachers in instructional situations has often been viewed as the most effective way to see first-hand the pedagogical strategies and interactions the teachers implement with their students as they teach



them to read. Two very different curricular views associated with the teaching of reading were reviewed in this study. Skills-based classrooms are teacher-directed and skills-oriented. Comprehension, vocabulary, and decoding are the focal points of this class instruction. These components are taught directly, in isolation, and typically prior to reading. Literature-based classrooms are child-centered, interactive communities. Vocabulary, comprehension, skills, and strategies are taught in the context of meaningful situations. Classroom activities involve students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Ms. Jones' classroom was a constant hum of activity, as the students interacted with each other and with the teacher. Reading and talking were two avenues to learning that Ms. Jones used to her full advantage. She stressed the importance of students having a strong vocabulary; therefore, she provided activities that promoted language, both oral and written. Ms. Jones read to the class several times per day. Read-aloud experiences were the children's favorites; but shared reading, poetry reading, buddy reading, independent reading, and basal reading were experienced almost daily. Writing was conducted in Ms. Jones' classroom on a daily basis and usually within a cooperative group structure. Ms. Jones stressed the importance of vocabulary and comprehension skills but attended to this most often through "talk in the classroom." Skills lessons were generally integrated into story discussions or an extension of another activity. In general, Ms. Jones' classroom practices evolved around a child-centered room in which the teacher was a constant facilitator.

Ms. Doe's third-grade classroom permeated active cooperation. The students interacted (with inside voices) with one another, as needed or desired, in most all

activities. The class officially began and ended with some form of reading experience. Vocabulary and skill development were generally taught in conjunction with a writing, enrichment, or class discussion activity. Cooperative activities were continually implemented by the students, as well as by the teacher. Whole group activities (due to the small room) were utilized quite frequently but were conducted so interactively that it appeared to be independent, buddy, or small group work.

Ms. Lee's classroom was routinely managed in order to efficiently cover the day's skills. The children were immersed in learning activities from the beginning to the end of the reading instructional period. All activities were teacher-directed and controlled, yet an authoritative presence was not noted. Vocabulary and skill development activities were constantly provided for the students, as they typically completed five to six different skill activities per reading period: flashcard study, worksheets, basal workbook, phonics tapes, phonics video tape, and board activities. The activities were generally presented by the teacher, partially completed as a class, and concluded independently, as the teacher constantly monitored and provided assistance. Reading experiences consisted of basal reader activities during regular instructional time, but the teacher did occasionally read aloud after lunch.

Ms. Hill's classroom was very teacher-directed, yet allowed much student interaction freedom. Ms. Hill initiated and closed each activity of the day. The only exception being that at certain times the students could freely read their library books after completing a task. Each activity whether it was vocabulary building, comprehension questioning, skill development, or enrichment began with the teacher, was worked through with the teacher, completed with the teacher, and closed with

the teacher. Vocabulary building was very important to Ms. Hill as it was taught sporadically all through the day. The teacher directed the class but the students were constantly involved in some learning skill activity.

Question #3:  
Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Teachers construct their own conception of development, curriculum, and instruction as they act to integrate these consistencies into their practices (Spodek, 1988).

The final research question addressed in this study asks, "Is there a relationship between the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices in providing appropriate reading instruction?" Belief statements retrieved from the teachers' Reading Belief Interviews, coupled with instructional characteristics of the learning-to-read models used in this study, allowed predictions to be made regarding the participants' teaching practices. These predictions, when compared to actual classroom observations, establish a percentage of agreement regarding consistency or inconsistency that can be used to formulate a conclusion regarding the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices.

Ms. Jones was identified as a teacher holding a strong top-down/literature-based construct of reading. Ninety percent of her interview responses were internally consistent and conceptually related to a top-down theoretical model of reading, and her survey responses represented an instructional emphasis of higher order linguistic units. The instructional practices Ms. Jones implemented in her classroom exemplified her stated beliefs at an overall 92% congruency (see Table 6.2). Vocabulary recognition, as it related to comprehension, resulted in a major inconsistency error. This discrepancy,

TABLE 6.2  
Beliefs/Practices Relationship (Susie Jones)

Belief	Observed	Not Observed	Congruency %
Reading for meaning	10	0	100%
Comprehension (doesn't require recognition of all vocabulary)	5	4	56
Application of all 3 cueing systems	6	1	86
Reading, writing, speaking, listening	4	0	100
Higher level language units instruction	9	0	100
Student-directed	4	4	100
Evaluation through reading	4	0	100

however, was in the variation of her professed belief and not her stated belief, as evidenced by her interview response, “ I do believe that vocabulary should be taught prior to reading. The words are always introduced in context, but I do share them with the children prior to basal reading.” Therefore, I concluded that Ms. Jones exhibited a strong relationship between her beliefs and practices.

Ms. Doe was categorized as holding a moderate top-down/literature-based conceptual framework of reading. Two of her interview responses obtained information indicative of both constructs of reading and were, therefore, categorized as borderline responses. For this reason it was difficult to provide a percentage of internal acceptance of this belief; however, most of the other responses strongly supported the top-down philosophy. Her instructional orientation supported an instructional emphasis on higher

order language skills and whole-to-part instruction. Overall agreement regarding the relationship between Ms. Doe's teaching beliefs and her pedagogical practices was rated at 92% (see Table 6.3). The two areas that illustrated a lower degree of congruency among specific beliefs both related to vocabulary. In addition, the same premise existed regarding the variance in the participant's espoused beliefs and established beliefs as identified previously in Ms. Jones' case study. In referring to Ms. Doe's interview responses, the responses in both areas did reflect her practices--the error of inconsistency was in the understanding or acceptance of the theoretical constructs, not in the teacher's actual beliefs and practices. Even with this discrepancy, Ms. Doe still showed a strong correlation between teacher beliefs and practices.

TABLE 6.3

Beliefs/ Practices Relationship (Marilyn Doe)

Belief	Observed	Not Observed	Congruency %
Reading for meaning	11	0	100%
Comprehension (doesn't require recognition of all vocabulary)	7	4	64
Application of all 3 cueing systems	6	2	75
Reading, writing, speaking, listening	4	4	100
Higher level language units instruction	9	0	100
Student-directed	4	4	100
Evaluation through reading	4	0	100

Ms. Lee's theoretical beliefs about how reading develops and instructional beliefs about how reading takes place were reflected as strong bottom-up/skills-based. Ninety percent of her interview responses were conceptually related to a bottom-up model, and her survey responses represented an instructional emphasis of lower order linguistic units. The instructional practices Ms. Lee implemented in her classroom exemplified her professed beliefs at 99% and thus demonstrated a strong relationship between teacher beliefs and instructional practice (see Table 6.4).

TABLE 6.4

Beliefs/Practices Relationship (Minnie Lee)

Belief	Observed	Not Observed	Congruency %
Word recognition emphasized	16	0	100%
Comprehension requires word recognition	9	1	90
Application of sound-letter cues	10	1	100
Mastery of skills	13	0	100
Lower level language units instruction	13	0	100
Teacher-directed	4	4	100
Evaluation on skills	7	0	100

Ms. Hill was categorized as holding a moderate bottom-up/skills-based conceptual framework to reading. Her interview responses were rated at 75% bottom-up, yet responses were more reflective of a part-to-whole belief about reading, and

survey responses represented a strong emphasis of lower level linguistic units (see Table 6.5). Ms. Hill showed a 94% congruency between her theoretical orientations to reading.

TABLE 6.5  
Beliefs/Practices Relationship (Sheryl Hill)

Belief	Observed	Not Observed	Congruency %
Word recognition emphasized	7	0	100%
Comprehension requires word recognition	9	0	90
Application of sound-letter cues	9	4	70
Mastery of skills	5	0	100
Lower level language units instruction	5	0	100
Teacher-directed	4	0	100
Evaluation on skills	5	0	100

In conclusion, the pedagogical activities the four teachers engaged in during reading instruction were reflective of their theoretical orientations to reading--process and instruction. There were occasions in which divergences occurred, due to the inconsistency between certain theoretical beliefs and teachers' stated beliefs. In other words, the teachers were not always cognizant of accurate theoretical issues, yet did practice what they believed to be accurate. The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers adhered to their beliefs when teaching, not whether the observed participants taught according to correct methodology. Therefore, I concluded that a

relationship existed between teachers' beliefs about reading and their instructional practices.

In addition to the aforementioned conclusion and the implications this holds for teacher preparation and continual staff development, other strengths of the study were noted:

1. The theoretical orientation design model was designed to aid in the identification of teachers' beliefs of both reading process and instruction. The process model included oral reading errors, unknown words in both oral and silent reading, the most important student engagement activity, introduction of vocabulary prior to reading, information obtained through testing, and overall goals of the reading program. The instructional orientation model included such identification factors as text selection, recognition of unknown words, knowledge of the alphabet, sight word vocabulary, oral reading errors, introduction of vocabulary, fluency, and skills instruction.
2. The development of activity categories for identifying instructional practices implemented in the classroom: motivation, vocabulary, reading, skills, writing, and enrichment.
3. Identification of common categories that exist among both theoretical construct systems with the differentiation being the direction each orientation moves within the category. Identified categories included: emphasis or print interpretation, comprehension, cueing systems, instruction, language units, directed activities, and evaluation.



### **Limitations**

With any research, there are limitations inherent in the selected methodology, whether one uses a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Balancing the rich description of a qualitative study is concern over issues of validity and reliability. These issues have been discussed fully in Chapter 3, and I have made every effort to ensure that this research report was trustworthy.

This study was intended to provide an interpretation of four primary grade teachers' theoretical beliefs and practices about reading. Because my interpretations were specific to these four cases, I cannot infer what would happen with all teachers. The transferability of the conclusions from this study must be determined by other researchers who wish to apply these findings to other settings. However, the descriptions, narratives, and work samples embedded in this study are intended to provide information which will make conclusions about transferability easier.

Observations over one instructional semester provided general information on each participant's classroom practices. However, since I was not in attendance every day to see everything that occurred, it is possible that I was not cognizant of certain events that might have changed my interpretations. The use of member checking was employed as a possible means to ameliorate this potential limitation.

### **Implications for Future Study**

In my attempts to narrow the massive amount of field notes in order to better concentrate on the three research questions postulated for this study, I eliminated from the report other issues that might have had relevance for future extensions of this work. Examples of questions for further study might include:

1. What factors at Moss Elementary promoted two top-down/literature-based primary grade teachers?
2. What role did the principal as instructional leader play in the promotion of top-down/literature-based programs at Moss Elementary?
3. What factors influenced the consistent practice of teaching vocabulary prior to reading among all four of the teachers, regardless of theoretical beliefs?
4. What differences might be noted in the future, regarding the students' reading levels, reading and writing, and motivation between the top-down and bottom-up groups of children?

To increase the descriptive parameters of this study, future researchers may also want to expand their examination of factors that could affect teachers' theoretical beliefs and practices to include the school environment in which the teachers participated in as children, the teacher education program they attended, and the types of staff development offered to them as inservice teachers. Research indicates that preservice teachers could begin their teacher-education program with preconceived ideas of teaching and learning that derived from years of experience with themselves as students in school and that these experiences often affect future training as well. Vygotsky (1962) referred to these ideas as "lay theories," beliefs which developed naturally over time without the benefit of instruction. These lay theories often act as filters to new concepts and ideas. As teachers try to make sense of new information, their preconceived assumptions allow information to be transformed, restructured, and adjusted to fit their paradigm of teaching and learning. These beliefs are developed over years of experience in school, as preservice teachers, and later as teachers and,

therefore, could affect teacher decisions regarding instructional practices implemented in their classrooms.

In addition to possible extensions of this work, attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates can inform educational practice in so many ways. This research was rooted in my concerns about the apparent discrepancy between some teachers' assertions about their instructional practices and my observations of their teaching. This concern was extended to include the disparity I observed while working with new teachers. The new teachers appeared to be equipped with a repertoire of teaching strategies, yet lacked the theoretical foundation for the application of these practices. These two posits made me acutely aware of the need to determine what was missing and then to investigate the relevance it might hold.

This study explored the personal beliefs and educational practices of four primary grade teachers and analyzed the relationships between their philosophical beliefs and pedagogical practices. The results of this study concluded that a strong correlation existed between teacher beliefs and the instructional practices implemented in their classrooms, even when the beliefs were not grounded in research. This realization has strong implications for me as a supervisor, because if beliefs can guide practice, then I need to be sure that my teachers possess appropriate construct systems.

Teachers in training are exposed to many ideas and theories about learning and instruction in their professional preparation. If, in fact, theoretical beliefs influence future instruction, then the preservice programs for those aspiring to become teachers can incorporate these theoretical foundations and corresponding instructional practices into a comprehensive training program. The key to providing effective literacy for early

childhood instruction is not only in different classroom programs and approaches but with informed teachers who critically reflect on theory and practice to promote the most powerful instruction to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms (Routman, 1991). By making the link between theory and practice explicit, we can help teachers come to realize that all instructional choices are related to and derived from personally held theories about the reading process. Teachers who know how theory and practice relate are able to make logical connections between the reading process and instructional choices for teaching children to read. By knowing what we do and why we do it, we will be better able to meet the needs of young readers.

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## APPENDIX A

### THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO READING PROFILE

*Please circle the most appropriate response. Answers to this survey will be kept confidential and anonymous.*

#### General Information:

- |                                  |                      |                  |                 |       |       |     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-----|
| 1. Age:                          | 20-30                | 31-40            | 41-50           | 51+   |       |     |
| 2. Current Educational Status:   | BA/BS                | MA/MS            | +30             | Ed. S | Ph. D |     |
| 3. Ethnic Background:            | Caucasian            | African American |                 |       |       |     |
|                                  | Asian-American       | Hispanic         |                 |       |       |     |
|                                  | Other _____          |                  |                 |       |       |     |
| 4. Major/Area of Specialization: | Elementary Education |                  | Early Childhood |       |       |     |
|                                  | Other _____          |                  |                 |       |       |     |
| 5. Years teaching experience:    | 1-5                  | 6-10             | 11-15           | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26+ |
| 6. Grades taught and length:     | ____ Grade           | ____ Years       |                 |       |       |     |
|                                  | ____ Grade           | ____ Years       |                 |       |       |     |
|                                  | ____ Grade           | ____ Years       |                 |       |       |     |

#### Current Work Information:

7. School name: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of children in class: \_\_\_\_ Boys \_\_\_\_ Girls \_\_\_\_ Total
9. Ethnic composition of classroom: \_\_\_\_ Caucasian
10. Number of children with disabilities: \_\_\_\_
11. Total length of daily reading instruction:
- |                     |                    |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| ____ 0-30 minutes   | ____ 30-60 minutes | ____ 60-90 minutes |
| ____ 90-120 minutes | ____ 120+ minutes  |                    |
12. The longest block of uninterrupted time you have for meaningful reading instruction:
- \_\_\_\_ 15 min. \_\_\_\_ 30 min. \_\_\_\_ 45 min. \_\_\_\_ 60 min. \_\_\_\_ 75 min. \_\_\_\_ 90 min

### The DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP)\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Read the following statements, and circle one of the responses that will indicate the relationship of the statement to your feelings about reading and reading instruction. Select one best answer that reflects the strength of your agreement or disagreement.*

1. A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

2. An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

3. Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

4. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

5. Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

6. When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

7. It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

8. The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

9. Reversals (e.g., saying “saw” for “was”) are significant problems in the teaching of reading.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

10. It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

11. It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

12. Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understand story content.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

13. It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

14. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD



15. When coming to a word that's unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess upon meaning and go on.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

16. Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

17. It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

18. Flashcard drill with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

19. Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho' to graph, pho to' gra phy, pho to gr phic') should be developed as part of reading instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

20. Controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat.) is a means by which children can best learn to read.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

21. Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of skills used in reading.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

22. Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

23. Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

24. Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

25. It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

26. If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

27. It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

28. Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped).

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PARTICIPANT INVITATION/EXPLANATORY LETTER**

May 18, 1997

Dear Teachers,

I am currently preparing to begin gathering data to complete the research necessary to write my dissertation. With your assistance, I will be able to complete the remaining requirements in my pursuit of a doctorate degree in Reading Education from Louisiana State University.

As you are no doubt aware, the current move toward school-based management provides the classroom teacher with more authority in the decision-making process especially within the confines of their classrooms. This coupled with the continuous debate over the best method of teaching reading, skills-based or literature-based, often puts the teacher in a precarious situation. This study, I hope, will help teachers see the need to translate their beliefs about reading into effective practices and thus provide more success to beginning readers.

The study will be a qualitative look at the belief structures held by early literacy teachers and the instructional practices executed in the classroom. The study will basically be conducted in three phases: completion of a belief oriented survey by a large sample of early literacy teachers; completion of a follow-up interview by a smaller selected population; and, observational visits of a small number of selected participants.

I am requesting that all Richland Parish first-third grade teachers participate in phase one of the study by completing the attached survey. I realize that this is a hectic time of year for all of you but the survey should actually only take about 30 minutes to complete -- it appears lengthy due to the large print and easy to read format. The demographic data on the initial page of the survey will be used only for purposes of sorting responses into various categories. All information provided will be completely confidential. Selection of participants for subsequent phases of the study will be based on willingness to serve (please ☺), survey responses, and equal distribution of various factors ( grade level, experience, etc.). Please return the survey by **May 28, 1997** in the attached envelope.

By participating in this study, you will not only be helping me but also performing a service that, I hope, will ultimately help teacher educators and staff developers better prepare teachers and thus begin an enlightened process of improved reading instruction in early literacy settings. I thank you in advance for your time and expertise.

Sincerely,

Carrice Cummins, Graduate Student  
Louisiana State University

**APPENDIX C**  
**READING BELIEF INTERVIEW**

**Background Information:**

Name_____	School_____
Position_____	Yrs. In Position_____ Total_____
Yrs. Exp_____	Other grades taught_____
Degree(s) held_____	University_____
Areas of Certification_____	

**Directions:**

*Read each question and respond in terms of your own classroom. As you respond to each question, explain what you do and why you do it.*

1. Describe a typical day of reading instruction in your classroom.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2a. What do you usually do when a student is reading orally and makes an oral reading error? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2b. What do you usually do when a student is reading orally and doesn't know a word? Why?

- 3a. You probably use different kinds of strategies and activities in teaching reading. Which ones do you feel are the *most* important for your students? Why?
- 3b. What kinds of activities do you feel students should be involved in for the *majority* of their reading instructional time? Why?
4. Here are the typical steps in the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) as suggested in basal reader manuals: (1) introduction of vocabulary; (2) motivation or setting purposes; (3) reading; (4) questions and discussion after silent reading; and (5) skills practice for reinforcement. Rank these steps in order from *most* important to *least* important (not necessarily in the order you follow them).
5. Is it important to introduce new vocabulary words before your students read a selection? Why or why not?
6. During silent reading, what do you hope your students do when they come to an unknown word?
7. Suppose your students were tested to provide you with information that helped you decide how to instruct them in reading. What did diagnostic testing include and what kind of information did it give you about your individual students?

8. Of all the goals for reading instruction that you have as a teacher which one(s) do you think you have made good progress toward accomplishing this year? Explain why?

10. Look at the oral reading mistakes, which are underlined below, on these transcripts of three readers. Which of the three readers would you judge as the best or most effective reader (Harste & Burke, 1977) and why?

*channel* *channel*

READER A I live near this canal. Men haul things up and down the canal in big boats.

*2. candle*  
*1. ca* *candle*

READER B I live near this canal. Men haul things up and down the canal in big boats.

*2. candle*  
*1. ca* *cannel*

READER C I live near this canal. Men haul things up and down the canal in big boats.

10. Describe what you feel would be the components of a “perfect” reading classroom.

**APPENDIX D**  
**SUPERINTENDENT PERMISSION LETTER**

May 8, 1997

██████████, Superintendent  
██████████ School Board  
P. O. Box  
██████████

Dear ██████████:

I am currently preparing to begin gathering data to complete the research necessary to write my dissertation. This dissertation will complete the requirements set forth by Louisiana State University for a doctorate degree in Reading Education. I would like to be granted permission to conduct this study in ██████████.

The study will be a qualitative look at the belief structures held by early literacy teachers and the instructional practices executed in the classroom. The study will focus on three broad areas: teachers' theoretical orientations of the reading process, teachers' theoretical orientations of reading instruction, and the relationship between these belief systems. Data for the study will be obtained via three phases of collection procedures: completion of belief oriented surveys by early literacy teachers, grades one-three; completion of a follow-up interview by a smaller selected population; and, observational visits of a small number of selected participants.

The Principals at each of the five elementary schools have been informed of my intentions and are supportive of my efforts. The teachers who select to participate will do so voluntarily and will be aware that their responses and actions are confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. Parents of the children in the classrooms chosen to participate in the final phase of research will also be informed of my intentions and appropriate permission will be obtained.

I thank you in advance for your support of this educational endeavor. With the continued cooperation and assistance that I have always received from ██████████, I am certain that the study will be a success. If you should have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carrice Cummins, Graduate Student  
Louisiana State University



**APPENDIX E**  
**PRINCIPAL PERMISSION LETTER**

May 8, 1997

██████████, Principal  
██████████ Elementary School  
██████████

Dear ██████████:

I am currently preparing to begin gathering data to complete the research necessary to write my dissertation. This dissertation will complete the requirements set forth by Louisiana State University for a doctorate degree in Reading Education. I would like to be granted permission to include the first-third grade teachers at ██████████ Elementary in the study.

The study will be a qualitative look at the belief structures held by early literacy teachers and the instructional practices executed in the classroom. The study will focus on three broad areas: teachers' theoretical orientations of the reading process, teachers' theoretical orientations of reading instruction, and the relationship between these belief systems. Data for the study will be obtained via three phases of collection procedures: completion of belief oriented surveys by early literacy teachers, grades one-three; completion of a follow-up interview by a smaller selected population; and, observational visits of a small number of selected participants. The teachers who select to participate will do so voluntarily and will be aware that their responses and actions are confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. Parents of the children in the classrooms chosen to participate in the final phase of research will also be informed of my intentions and appropriate permission will be obtained.

I thank you in advance for your support of this educational endeavor. With the continued cooperation and assistance that I have always received from the schools in ██████████ ██████████, I am certain that the study will be a success. If you should have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carrice Cummins, Graduate Student  
Louisiana State University

## **APPENDIX F**

### **PARTICIPANT PERMISSION LETTER**

Dear Participants,

I want to welcome you and say thank you for agreeing to participate in the final phase of my study. I have really enjoyed visiting with you thus far as we worked through the first two phases of the research and the best is yet to come.

We have previously discussed the general outline for the remaining phase of this study so the primary purpose of this notification is to obtain written permission of your willingness to participate in this project. You can expect and will receive complete ethical behavior as I have a responsibility to safeguard your rights, interests, and sensitivities. I am no longer your Supervisor in this process so I will in no way be evaluating you or sharing any findings without your verbal and written consent. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts from my observations and make any needed clarifications. The data you provide will be confidential in that you will not be identified by your real name in the study.

Again thank you for assisting me in this research study. Your input will be extremely valuable to me and hopefully to others as we continue to study the reading profession.

Sincerely,

Carrice Cummins, Ed.S.

\*\*\*\*\*

I agree to be a participant in a research study conducted by Carrice Cummins for the purpose of studying teachers' theoretical orientations to reading - process and instruction .

---

Signature

## APPENDIX G

### PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Family:

Please let me introduce myself. I am the Curriculum Supervisor for the [REDACTED] School Board and also a student at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge where I am pursuing my doctorate degree in reading. As part of the requirements for my degree, I will be doing research with your child's teacher during the remainder of this semester.

I will be conducting a qualitative study of teacher beliefs about reading instruction. This will require that I spend time in the classroom observing the types of activities the teacher and children are involved in during reading time. For the most part, I will be taking notes and talking with the teacher about her reading instruction. However, there may be an opportunity for me to talk with the children, collect work samples, take photographs, and audiotape and/or videotape the classroom in order to fully understand the activities being used. In these activities, the students will be a part of the lesson and therefore may be included. Should this occur, I need your permission for your child to participate. All of the children will remain anonymous and will only be included to add validity to the teacher's activities.

Please complete the bottom of this letter and return it to your child's teacher. I will be in your child's classroom on Thursday from 3:00-4:00 p.m. to answer any questions you may have or you may contact me at 728-5964 (work) or 878-5545 (home) if this is more convenient. Thank you for the opportunity to work in your child's classroom.

Sincerely,

Carrice Cummins, Ed. S.

\*\*\*\*\*

I give permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in Mrs. Cummins' study. I understand that she may talk to my child, collect work samples, photograph, audiotape or videotape, and write a report of her findings. I understand that my child's identity will remain anonymous.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX H**

### **GUIDELINES FOR ANALYZING THE READING BELIEFS INTERVIEW**

#### **Question 1 and 10. Typical day and ideal classroom.**

All responses are acceptable as question 1 was used basically as an ice-breaker and question 10 was used as a means of “winding down” the interview. Some attention was given if responses happened to provide clarity to responses of other items.

#### **Question 2a. Teacher response to oral reading errors.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Help students sound out the word.

Tell students the word and have them repeat the word.

(Top-down responses):

Ask if there response makes sense.

Don't interrupt and let the error go.

If the error affects meaning, ask students to reread the passage and see what makes sense.

#### **Question 2b. Teacher response to an unknown word.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Help students sound out the word.

Help them distinguish smaller words within the word.

Tell them to use their word attack skills.

Give them word clues.

(Top-down responses);

Tell them to skip the word, go on, then come back to see what makes sense.

Ask them what makes sense and starts with\_\_\_\_.

#### **Questions 3a and 3b. Most important instructional activities.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Working on skills, phonics, sight vocabulary.

Focusing on word recognition.

(Top-down responses):

Actual reading, silent reading, independent reading.

Comprehension.

Discussions of what has been read.

**Question 4. Ranking parts of the Directed Reading Procedure.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Introduction of vocabulary.

Skills practice.

(Top-down responses):

Setting purposes for reading.

Reading.

Reaction to silent reading.

**Question 5. Introducing new vocabulary words.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Very important because students need to know what words they will see while reading.

Not necessary, if students have learned word attack skills so they can sound them out.

Important if students do not know the meaning of the words.

(Top-down responses):

Not necessary as students can often figure out words from context.

**Question 6. Unknown words in silent reading.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Sound it out.

Use their word attack skills.

(Top-down responses):

Look at the sentence and think of a word that makes sense.

Skip the word .

Use context.

**Question 7. Reading test information.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Test word attack skills, letter names, sight words, word meanings.

Test ability to analyze letter patterns of words missed during oral reading.

Test visual skills.

(Top-down responses):

Test comprehension.

Test whether students are able to glean meanings from words in context.

Have students read passages and answer questions.

Have students read and follow directions.

**Question 8. Main instructional goals.**

(Bottom-up responses):

To increase students' ability to blend sounds into words.

Increase knowledge of phonetic sounds.

Build sight vocabulary.

Increase ability to use word attack skills.

(Top-down responses):

Increase students' ability to read independently.

Increase students' enjoyment of reading.

Improve comprehension.

**Question 9. Most effective reader.**

(Bottom-up responses):

Reader c, because cannel is graphically similar to canal.

Reader B, because candle is a real word that is graphically similar to canal.

(Top-down responses):

Reader A, because channel is similar in meaning to canal.

## APPENDIX I

### SCORING CRITERIA FOR THE THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO READING PROFILE

After completing the TORP:

1. Add the point values as indicated on each item, except for items 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 23, 26, and 27.
2. Reverse the point values for items 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 23, 26, and 27 by assigning five points for strongly agree (SA) to one point for strongly disagree (SD).

5	4	3	2	1
SA				SD

3. Combine the values derived in steps 1 and 2 for an overall score.
4. Identify your theoretical orientation according to the following score ranges (as identified for purposes of this study):

Theoretical Orientation	Overall Score Range
Phonics-based	0 - 57
Skills-based	58 - 102
Literature-based	103 - 140

## **VITA**

Carrice Cummins attended elementary and junior high school in Delhi, Louisiana, and completed high school in Waynesboro, Mississippi. She received her bachelor of arts degree, 1975, and her master of science degree, 1980, in elementary education from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. During this time, and until 1982, Carrice taught in the Mississippi public schools serving in various teaching positions: secondary Math, kindergarten/first grade transition, and first through fourth grades.

In 1982, Carrice moved to Wichita, Kansas, and began taking graduate courses at Wichita State University in the area of reading for disadvantaged children. She served as the Regional Director for Kinder Care Learning Centers prior to her employment in the Wichita Unified School District as a reading resource specialist.

Carrice returned to the state of Louisiana in 1985 where she became an employee of the Richland Parish School Board. She served the district as a classroom teacher, junior high math and first grade, until 1990 and is currently serving as Curriculum Supervisor. Carrice continued her education during this time, receiving a education specialist degree from Northeast Louisiana University and certification as a principal/supervisor in 1990. She is currently completing the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University, which will be awarded in May 1998.



Carrice lives in Delhi, Louisiana, with her husband, Bill, and their children,  
Mason and Christi.

# DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

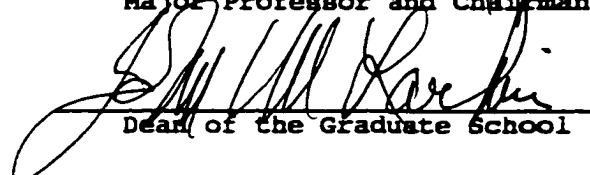
**Candidate:** Carrice Cummins

**Major Field:** Curriculum and Instruction

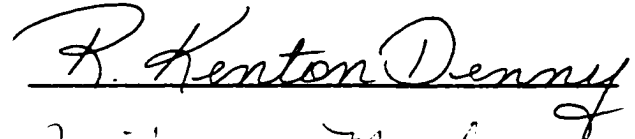
**Title of Dissertation:** An Investigation of the Relationship Between Teachers' Orientations in Reading - Process and Instruction: Four Case Studies

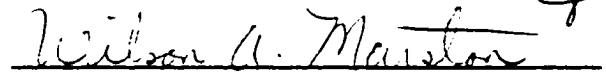
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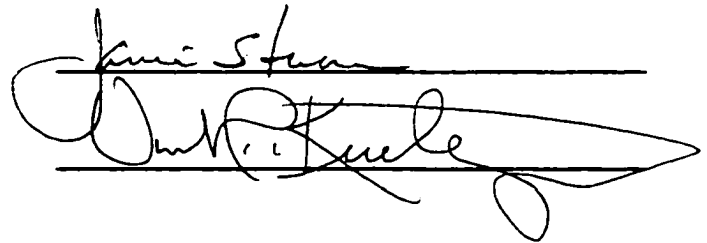
  
Major Professor and Chairman

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## EXAMINING COMMITTEE:



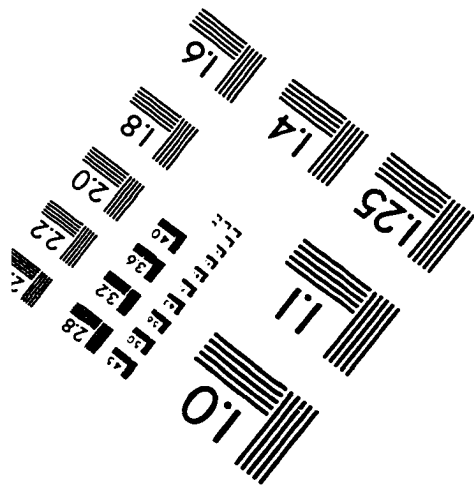
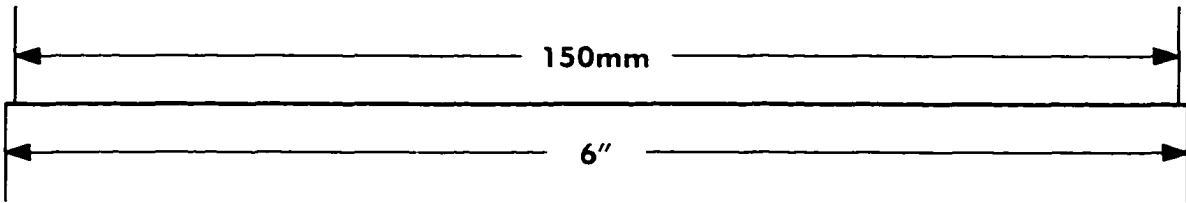
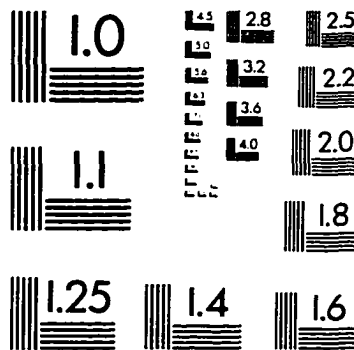
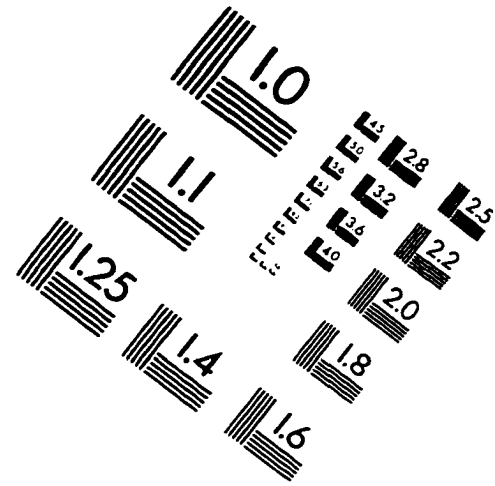
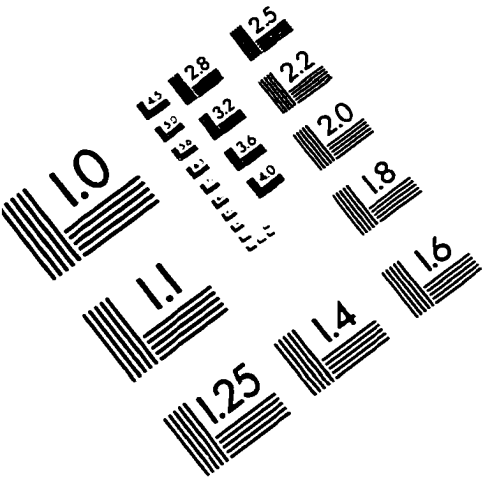




**Date of Examination:**

March 16, 1998

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